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THE MARQUIS.

A ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

BY EUGENE SUE,

AUTHOR OF "THE MYSTERIES OF THE PEOPLE," &c.

NEW YORK:
W. F. BURGESS, 22 ANN-STREET.

1850.

In Press, and will be Published immediately,

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OR,

THE CONSPIRATOR'S VICTIM.

BY NED BUNTLINE.

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WITHOUT ABRIDGEMENT.

THE

MARQUIS DE LETORIERE:

OR,

THE ART OF PLEASING.

A Romance of Real Life.

BY EUGENE SUE.

AUTHOR OF THE

MYSTERIES OF PARIS, &c.

JUST TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY THOMAS POOLEY, ESQ

New-York:
W. F. BURGESS, 22 ANN-STREET.
1850.

INTRODUCTION.

THE "Marquis De Letoriere, or the Art of Pleasing," is one of the most admired of the Romances of Eugene Sue. It has been dramatised and produced upon the stage with marked success. Indeed, the deep and vivid interest of the plot renders it eminently calculated for dramatic effect.

The story is not wholly a fictitious one. The hero was a real personage, and his adventures are not purely imaginative. Although dealing with characters somewhat different from those which excite our passion for the marvellous in "The Mysteries of Paris," we think that the author has here given evidence of powers equally high, and that the "Marquis" will be found inferior in nothing but length.

Of the present translation, the publishers may be allowed to say, that it has been executed with admirable skill, and that the spirit of the original has been successfully preserved throughout.

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THE

MARQUIS DE LETORIÈRE;

OR,

THE ART OF PLEASING.

CHAPTER I.

THE TAILOR.

In the year 1769, in Saint Honore street, not far from the Palais Royal, might be seen the modest front of a tailor's shop, having for its sign an enormous pair of gilded shears, suspended from an iron rod over the door. Master Landry, proprietor of the "Golden Shears," a slim, pale, and apathetic little man, presented a striking contrast to his wife, Madeleine Landry.

The latter, who might have seen some thirty-five or forty years, was active and robust; her harsh features, masculine gait, together with a rough and commanding tone of voice, showed pretty plainly that she held absolute sway in the household.

It was on a dull and rainy December day, and about eleven o'clock. Master Landry, seated on his board, was handling alternately the shears and the needle, in company with his apprentice, Martin Kraft, a tall, stout, phlegmatic German of about twenty years of age, with plump and rosy cheeks, long hair, rather yellow than brown, and a dull, stupid cast of countenance.

The tailor's wife seemed to be in a violent fit of ill-humour. Landry and his apprentice maintained a respectful silence. At length, Madeleine, addressing her husband, said scornfully; "Go to, where's the blood that should be in your veins? You 'll let your very last customer be taken from you, idiot that you are!"

Landry and Martin elbowed and winked at each other, but said nothing; and the former plied his needle with increasing agility. Irritated, doubtless, at the submission of her victim, the dame continued, impetuously turning to her mate. "Who is it I am speaking to, pray?" The tailor and his aid still said not a word.

Madeleine, accompanying her speech with a smart box on the ear, said to her husband in an exasperated tone: "Methinks, when I say idiot I should be speaking to you, and that you might deign to answer me, unmannerly blockhead that you are!"

"By St. Genevieve!" cried the tailor, putting his hand to his cheek, and turning to his apprentice, "What do you think of that, Kraft?"

The other replied only by a heavy blow of his iron upon the seams of a coat; but there was in the descent of the goose so significant an expression of suggested retaliation, that dame Landry, with nimble hand, inflicted on the phlegmatic German the same chastisement as on Landry, saying: "And there's a lesson for you, and let it teach you to be cautious how you cast reflections on my conduct, lazy drone that you are!"

"What do you think of that, master Landry?" said the apprentice in turn, addressing his employer. The latter, to put an end to his wife's irritation, said to her very calmly: "Now, Madeleine, explain yourself quietly; for Kraft and I have had due warning to listen to what you have to say."

"The better for you! As to what I have to say, that's no great deal. Through your indolence, here's another of your best customers gone over to our neighbor, Mathurin; and he no less a person than the valet of a counsellor in parliament!"

"What, *your* customer leaving us?" asked the tailor of his apprentice with an angry look, and a dastardly attempt to turn his wife's wrath upon poor Kraft. "What, Martin, are these the patrons you recommend to us? Are you not ashamed? *Mine* would not do so! By Heaven! they are as faithful to me as thread to the needle—as the thimble to the finger — as ——"

"Tut, tut!" said Madam Landry, interrupting the tailor, "what idle prate is this, Master Landry! How can that be when the clerk of Mr. Buston, the attorney at the Chatelet, who is certainly your own custo-

mer, has deserted you, like the rest, for this fellow Mathurin?"

"How would you help it, wife? There must be some sorcery about this Mathurin in drawing customers to his shop," said Landry, sorrowfully; "for I defy any member of the honourable body of tailors to sew better or more strongly than I. Saint Genevieve, the patroness of our good city, knows that I do not cabbage the thousandth part of a quarter of an ell of furnished cloth! 'Tis just the same with the lace-makers; and ——"

"For Heaven's sake! spare me the full catalogue of your virtues, Mr. Landry; our neighbour Mathurin may be a rogue — a swindler, if you will; but at any rate he has his wits about him, he bestirs himself, forms profitable acquaintances, and does not sit all day like you with his arms crossed."

"Excuse me, madam; legs crossed, you mean," said Kraft, emphatically.

"Just listen to that animal!" said the housewife, casting a significant look at the apprentice, who hung down his head, and set furiously to work again with his iron.

Madam Landry resumed: "You have not a single good customer! Always mechanics, lawyers' clerks, salt-porters; not a solitary gentleman!"

"As for gentlemen, Madeleine," said the tailor, venturing a timid reproach, "I have one amongst my patrons, and you forbid my working for him ——"

Madeleine reddened with anger, and cried: "Do you still dare to talk to me of your marquis, your 'charming gentleman,' the sharper who has owed us three hundred livres now for a year, and from whom we have never been able to squeeze a red farthing?"

"And yet, forsooth, you wish for the patronage of gentlemen too!"

"I want the patronage of gentlemen who pay, and not of those rogues who strut about the streets of Paris with a sword at their side, a bad hat stuck upon one ear, to make victims of such fools as you and of poor trades-people like ourselves!"

The tailor raised his hands to Heaven: "'Tis very evident, Madeleine, you know no more of the marquis than of the Grand Sultan. He, a rogue! he, a sharper! Poor young man, so mild, so gentlemanly, so melancholy! — and then so handsome — one could stay an hour looking at him — *like a waxwork!*"

"So handsome!" repeated the dame, mimicking her husband; "and what does that prove? Was there ever such folly? Does he pay us the better for being pretty? Again I ask, what does that concern you?"

"Why, so far that when I see so unassuming a nobleman poor and unhappy — my heart melts, and I have not the courage to ask him for money. That's how it concerns me. In fact, Martin Kraft himself felt as I did; you sent him to dun the marquis for his bill; well! what did Martin tell you on his return? That instead of asking him for the money, he inquired whether he did not want a new coat."

"That only proves Martin Kraft to be as great a goose as yourself!"

"The fact is, this nobleman is so good-looking, that he might be taken for a painted wooden figure from Nuremburg," said the German, gravely, not being able to find any other technical term to express his admiration.

"Now hear the other!" said dame Landry, shrugging her shoulders contemptuously; and then added: "But stay, stay — this very day I 'll go myself, and show this charming gentleman that Madeleine Landry is not to be paid with coaxing ——"

A coach stopped before the tailor's shop, and the rain was falling in torrents.

The housewife assumed a more gracious expression, expecting to see a customer step from the coach; but, to her great surprise, the driver having dismounted slowly and heavily from his box, looked at the sign of the shop, and walked in.

"Master Landry?" asked he in a loud voice, as he shook his wrapper which was dripping with rain.

"First let me tell you, there's no necessity for your shaking yourself like a dog just out of water, in order to inquire for Master Landry," said Madeleine, tartly. "What do you want with him?"

"My good lady, if I shake myself, 'tis because I am wet through — drowned — as you see, and for the water I leave here, I shall have so much the less to carry with me."

"Much obliged to you for the preference," said the dame,

"As for Master Landry, I have a message for him from a young nobleman. May I never get another fare, if I ever laid eyes upon a prettier little seigneur! But here's a go," said the driver, interrupting himself, "here's my hat, like a gutter, leading the rain into my neck;" and he began shaking his head as he had done his coat.

Madeleine's ire was about to break forth again, when the window of the hack was let down. A man of about fifty years of age, stout, ruddy-faced, wearing powder, and clothed in black, began calling for the coachman with the voice of a stentor. As his bawling, however, proved ineffectual, he opened the door, jumped from the coach, and entered the shop.

"Will you tell me, saucy knave, why you stop here instead of driving me to the hotel de Soubise?" cried he.

"Begging your pardon, sir, 'tis because I had a message to deliver from a handsome nobleman —"

"And what is your nobleman to me! I am in haste. Come, let's be off! mount your seat."

"One minute, kind sir. I have promised this gentleman to do his errand, and I must do it —"

"How! you refuse to go on? Take care! if you are not on the way again in an instant, you shall hear from the lieutenant of police — and so I warn you."

"Be it so. I'll go and pass a night at the Fort-l'Eveque, if you please. I don't dispute your right to send me there; but I shall at least have kept my word with this young gentleman."

After renewed orders and threats, seeing no chance of prevailing over the driver's contumacy, the stout man in black, who was the intendant of the marechale princess de Rohan Soubise, vented a curse or two, and sat down.

"But," cried Madeleine, peevishly, and catching Sicard by the sleeve, "are you going to tell us after all, what you have to say to my husband?" And she pointed to Landry, who was watching the scene with gaping and breathless interest.

"Here's the whole story," said the hackney coachman: "I was passing an hour ago down the street of the Faubourg St. Honore, in a pouring rain. I saw under the porch of the Hotel Pompadour, a young man taking shelter there; but he was so graceful! one might have taken him for an angel. For all this wintry weather, he had on a miserable brown knitted coat, bound with black lace!"

"A brown knitted coat bound with black lace! Why, that's our coat!" cried dame Landry; "and he, the 'charming gentleman,' the confounded marquis, — he has but that coat, and owes for it too, — he is not very hard to recognize —"

"Well! if any one ever deserved to wear an embroidered suit, 'tis he to a certainty, for my name is not Jerome Sicard if I ever saw any thing more like a good angel."

"Well? what more of your good angel? Has he given you any money to hand to us? Has he at last sent the 300 livres that he has owed us now for a year?"

"Money! the poor little lad of wax! No indeed, not a cent! Who could have the heart to ask him for it? Why I myself drove him to the Palais Marchand for nothing—"

"There! my dear!" said the tailor, with an air of triumph.

"Hush! blockhead. He has duped you and the coachman too — another proof that he's a Jeremy Diddler."

"Duped!" said the worthy Sicard, stamping with rage. "Duped! I tell you, goody gossip, he's a genuine nobleman, and dupes no one. If I did treat him to a ride, 'twas for my own good pleasure. Seeing him thus stopped by the rain, I drew up close to the hotel, and said: "Get up, your honour." "No, I thank you, my lad," said he, in a low tone, and as sweet as music. "But you'll be wet to the skin." "'Tis very possible; only tell me, friend, what is the hour?" "Eleven, your honour." "Eleven o'clock, and I have business at the Palais Marchand at half past!" cried he in spite of himself, and casting a sad look at the rain, and at the gutters, which were like so many rivers. "Get up then, your honour," replied I; "in twenty minutes I 'll carry you there, but on foot in such weather as this, you will not be there before noon." "I thank you, my lad," said he sighing and yet smiling, "but I have no money; so do not lose your time here." "No money!" cried I, opening the door, and handing the handsome nobleman somewhat roughly into my coach (for he was as slender as a reed). "That shall never be, by Heaven! Jerome Sicard let a gentleman like your honour miss an interview for want of a two-shilling piece! Take my number — you can find me again, sir!" And without giving him time to answer, I jumped upon my box, and in eighteen minutes I set him down at the Palais Marchand."

"Well, well, it seems that every one must give in to his witchcraft — even a hackney coachman," replied dame Landry; "but wait and see —"

"Have you almost done!" cried the intendant of the princess de Soubise.

"In a moment, sir. Well! having reached the Palais Marchand, my gentleman said to me: "Give me your number, my lad; I sincerely desire to be one day able to acknowledge this your kind behaviour, and pay you the just value of this ride; for without your help, I should not have arrived in time for an audience of great importance to a lawsuit in which I am engaged; but since you are so obliging, I will ask another favour of you; I intended to go to my tailor's also, to tell him to bring home the coat he promised me for this evening, without fail. He lives in St. Honore street, at the sign of the 'Golden Shears;' if it does not lie too far out of your way, call at his shop, and tell the tailor that the marquis de Let — Less — Letorière — yes, that's it — de Letorière, expects, this evening, the coat for which he was measured a fortnight ago." "Let it be in or out of my way," I answered, "I'll go all the same." At that moment you came and engaged me by the hour, sir;" and the coachman turned towards the intendant. "I passed along St. Honore street, which was not a very round-about course for you, and here I am delivering my message to this worthy knight of the thimble," added the driver, addressing himself to Landry. "Now, tailor, don't forget this gentleman's coat, and if you can tell me at what hour it

will be ready, I 'll come and take you to his house — gratis — yes, my hearty fellow, gratis! for I am sure that to oblige any one with such an angel face as his must bring you luck. Now, sir, I beg pardon a thousand times;" and he turned again to the intendant: "we 'll be moving as soon as you please."

The latter, who had been attentive to this singular colloquy, felt interested in spite of himself, and was in no haste to re-enter the hack, especially when he heard dame Landry exclaim in an excited tone, and with a look of angry surprise directed to her husband: "Have you then dared, in spite of my orders to the contrary, to promise another coat to this good paymaster? But you have not commenced it, I hope?"

"Why, my dear woman —"

"Don't woman me, but answer!"

"I have done more, my dear, I 've made it," said the tailor, hanging his head.

"You 've made this coat? — of what? and when? — answer me! For the last week, I have seen you and your worthy apprentice at work upon nothing but these woollen wrappers and shag coats."

Willing to help out his patron, Martin Kraft ventured to say: "'Twas I, Madam Landry, who bought out of my own savings, five ells of purple Legovian cloth; in short, enough to make a full suit, with three ells of changeable taffety for trimming the vest and coat. We have worked at it by night, so as not to interfere with our day's labour."

"And so, whilst I was sound asleep, like an honest woman, you left your bed, like a vile criminal, to work upon this master-piece of tailoring!" cried the housewife.

"Zounds! — what could I do? — The poor little nobleman was a real eyesore to Martin and myself! By St. Genevieve! 'twas pitiful to see him, in the midst of winter, in that wretchedly thin coat. We could not forego the pleasure of clothing him like a gentleman, as he is. Don't make yourself uneasy; sooner or later he will pay us. I 'll thrust my hand in the fire, if he is not as honest as he is fascinating."

Jerome Sicard, a tall and stout personage of about thirty, had listened to the tailor's recital with increasing satisfaction. When Master Landry had made an end, the driver extended his broad hand, and said to him:

"Take that, worthy tailor; send your wife this instant for a bottle of your best wine, and let us drink together. And your good apprentice too, shall share the bottle with us; for you are an honour to the shears and shopboard — no member of your honourable body can be more so."

"If you *drink only* the wine that I help you to, it will not get into either of your heads, to disturb the little sense that is left there," said dame Landry, peevishly; "you are indeed a fit and worthy pot-companion of my dolt of a husband, if you allow yourself, like him, to be cajoled by any sharper that pleases! But since you are so handy at executing the commissions of this velvet mouthed marquis, you may go and tell him, that the coat will remain here till he has paid us the three hundred livres he already owes; — you may inform him also, to cut the matter short, that I am coming to present him his bill myself. If this handsome marquis be not at home, I shall wait for him, — if he do not give me, at least, something on account, I 'll go fetch the commissary this very day, and show you that a woman has more spirit than you all, who, I vow, remind me of so many wet hens."

"Wet, I grant you," said Jerome Sicard; "but as for hens — if I had my whip, or even the yard-stick that my worthy friend has on the board there, and you were my wife, I'd convince you feelingly that I at least have enough of the male bird in me to be able to flog you for refusing a glass of wine to friends. I speak without malice — but Heaven grant that what I have said, may inspire you with the happy idea of making your wife more closely acquainted with the yardstick, good master tailor," said Sicard; then turning to the intendant: "Sir, I am at your service."

"I 'm glad of it," said the latter, without feeling very sorry, however, for the delay: for the scene had amused him.

Upon the departure of the driver, dame Landry took her hood and mantle, and a large umbrella, ordered her husband to bring her the Legovie coat intended for M. de Letorière, which she put under lock and key, and went out, with her exasperation at its height, to wait for the "charmer" at his own home — for this was the epithet she applied to the marquis, in derision.

CHAPTER II.

THE EX-PROFESSOR DU PLESSIS.

The marquis resided at no great distance from the shop of his creditor. M. de Letorière occupied a small room and closet on the fifth floor of a house in St. Florentin street.

He shared this humble retreat with Doctor Jean Francois Dominique, ex-professor of the college du Plessis.

By an unaccountable freak of destiny, the young marquis, born to fascinate all, whether of high or low degree, had first exercised his inexplicable power of fascination upon this old professor of sciences, who entertained for him the deepest affection.

In spite of the many mischievous pranks of the frolicsome boy, the learned Dominique had discovered in his pupil so many fine qualities of mind and heart, and so much greatness of soul, that he became singularly attached to him. Perhaps, too, the uncommon disposition which the marquis, one of the most distinguished philologists of the college du Plessis, displayed for the study of the ancient languages, had called forth this extraordinary devotion of the old professor for his pupil.

The abbe du Vighan, uncle to M. de Letorière, had for six years paid the college expenses of his nephew, who was a friendless orphan. During a journey which the abbe was called on to perform, there was an intermission of payment for one term. The marquis, whose sensibility was wounded by some remarks made by the principal on the subject of this failure of the accustomed remittance, resolved to quit college.

Dominique, when informed of his pupil's projects, did all in his power to dissuade him; but the marquis was in his nineteenth year and extremely self-willed. The poor professor, unable to deter him from committing this piece of folly, determined, at any rate, to accompany him in his flight, so fearful was he of letting the marquis encounter alone the chances of a great city.

Dominique himself made all the preparations for their escape; on a cloudy night, master and scholar scaled the college walls, a feat, not without peril to the old professor, untrained and ill-formed as he was for such kinds of exercise.

The principal, well-pleased, perhaps, at being rid of a mutinous and turbulent student, made no attempt to bring back the fugitives.

Letorière was possessed of fifteen louis; Dominique had a little interest in the "gabelles," which produced an income of fifty pistoles; this was the amount of the funds with which they commenced their establishment.

The whole fortune bequeathed to the marquis by his father, consisted of two or three interminable lawsuits. The most considerable one, which had been pending for fifty years, was an action for recovery, instituted against the dukes of Brunswick Oels and the princess of Brandeburg-Barcuth, by the great aunt of M. de Letorière, Miss d' Olbreuse, who, at the time of the edict of Nantes, had emigrated, and married one of the agnats or collateral heirs to the duchy of Brunswick.

A poor gentleman of Haintonge, without supporters, and without credit, Letorière despaired of ever being able to prosecute these suits on which might depend a fortune he yet durst not hope for; twenty times had he been on the point of enlisting for a soldier; but the influence of the good Dominique had hitherto deterred him from this step.

The ex-professor du Plessis had carefully perused the filed documents relating to these points in litigation. His love for his pupil had made him almost a lawyer. The good title of the marquis seemed evident to him; there was nothing wanted, said he, but patience; and some day or other the suits would undoubtedly terminate in his favor. Becoming daily a more enthusiastic admirer of the marquis, he boldly compared him to Alcibiades, so irresistible did he find the fascinating qualities he possessed. Jean Francois Dominique modestly reserved for himself the character of Socrates, which he personated by incessantly predicting the most brilliant fortune for his pupil.

"Alas! poor Dominique," the young man would say to him, "I have nothing but my hand and sword — no protectors; without you, I should be alone in the world."

"Nay, you have a charm, my son; you are loved as soon as seen, esteemed as soon as known; and for no other cause than your good and generous nature; then you have intellect, and are as well versed in Latin and Greek as myself; the German is as familiar to you as your native tongue (thanks to the care of your deceased father, who had you brought up by a German valet de chambre); and you are of high birth too, although you may not be able to trace your lineage to Euryalus, the son of Ajax, as did Alcibiades, whom I call my hero, because you resemble him so strikingly. Have patience, then; your career will be perhaps even more brilliant than his. Ay, that it will! As surely as Socrates saved his pupil's life at Potidea! But I know your heart, and am sure that when raised to the very pinnacle of fortune, you will no more forget old Jean-Francois Dominique than Alcibiades did the old philosopher!"

These predictions, however fantastical and absurd they might appear even to the young marquis, tended for a time at least, to sustain his courage, to keep alive the hope of gaining one of his suits at law, and prevent his enlisting as a private soldier, the intention to do which he had often manifested, to the great dismay of poor Dominique.

Madeleine Landry soon reached the rue St. Florentin. After having mounted to the apartment on the fifth story, occupied by her debtor, the tailor's wife stopped for a moment on the landing, in order to recover breath, and be able to give free vent to her indignation.

When she had recovered from the effects of her hurried walking, she knocked. A slow and heavy step was heard, and the door opened.

To the astonishment of Madeleine, a man of hideous aspect presented himself.

This was no other than the ex-professor du Plessis. Jean-Francois Dominique was then bordering on fifty years of age; he was tall and raw-boned. His face, meagre, pale, and of immoderate length, showed trace of the ravages of small pox; and his thin grey hair was gathered in a knot behind, tied with a piece of tape. A well-worn blanket, in which he wrapped himself majestically, served him for a morning gown. His countenance wore an expression of pedantic gravity and self-complacency, that were truly remarkable. The room he occupied displayed an aspect of poverty, but a studied neatness prevailed throughout. At the farther end of a recess stood a small bed with a single mattress, a chest of drawers, a table, and four walnut chairs carefully polished, constituted their stock of furniture. The half open door of a little closet exposed to view a cot with its covering carefully tucked in. Although the winter was extremely severe, there was no trace of fire on the hearth of this frigid dwelling. Lastly, at the foot of the little bedstead were displayed two small portraits in crayon, set in tolerably rich gilt frames; one of which represented a middle-aged man in a periwig a la Louis XIV., and wearing the cross of St. Louis attached to one of the clasps of his cuirass. The other was the portrait of an exceedingly beautiful woman, dressed as the hunting Diana.

The painful struggle between pride and poverty which the appearance of this room evinced, would have moved to pity any other woman than Madeleine Landry. "Does one Mr. Letorière live here?" inquired she bluntly of the old man, who had drawn his blanket into something like the form of a Roman toga.

The words "one Mr. Letorière," grated harshly on the ex-professor's ear; his answer was therefore dignified and caustic: "All that I can tell you is, that the high and mighty seigneur Lancelot-Marie-Joseph du Vighan, lord of Marseilles and marquis de Letorière — lodges in these apartments, my good woman —"

"Good woman!" screamed Madeleine in a rage, "I'll show you how good a woman I am!" Where's your master, your fine marquis de Diddler, your high and mighty seigneur de Loafery?"

Jean-Francois Dominique drew himself up in his toga, and extending his long, naked, and scraggy arm in the direction of the door, said with the tone of an emperor, "Begone this instant! Monsieur le marquis, my noble pupil, is out. I know not when he will return — but at any rate, I presume he would willingly forego the gratification of seeing you, my dear woman — for if anger disfigures the most charming features, as the sage says, "a fortiori" does it render hideous those to whom nature has been a niggard of her gifts! Of this truth you are a striking illustration; do me then the favour to —" and Dominique again pointed very significantly to the door.

Exasperated at this insult, the tailor's wife cast her umbrella upon the floor, threw herself into a chair, and exclaimed: "It well becomes an ugly owl like yourself to talk of the homeliness of others! This beautiful boy is your pupil then, you say? Egad! I believe you there, for you do look like one that has taken his degrees in iniquity, you hackneyed old miscreant! But I move not hence — till I am paid — d'ye hear? or by St. Madeleine, my patroness, if I do go out, it shall be to the commissary's."

"Ha! indeed; paid for what, I pray?" asked Dominique.

"For the clothes that your vagabond has on his back. I am the wife of Master Landry, tailor, at the 'Golden Shears;' and if my husband has been dupe enough to give you credit till now, I'll not be fool enough to imitate him. I want my money. I stir not a step till I have it."

"How!" cried Dominique, folding his arms with the most disdainful look he could summon, "is this the pitiful object for which thou comest hither to torture my ears with thy vile screeching, and importune Monsieur le marquis! Hast thou then forgotten that, in days of yore, the cities of Greece disputed with each other the honour of offering their services to Alcibiades? that the Ephesians pitched his tents? that the inhabitants of Chios fed his steeds? that the Lesbians supplied his tables? and all this gratis — dost mark me — gratis! solely for the honour of making an offering to Alcibiades! And thou, the wife of a miserable artisan, for three hundred paltry livres, which do not make the tenth part of a talent, for this miserable claim on the marquis, my pupil, who is, or will be, by Hercules! a greater man than Alcibiades, comest hither screaming like an osprey! *Go, rather*, thou infatuated crone, and bless the day that my pupil deigned to cast his eyes on thy ignoble workshop! Recal to thy mind the fact, that the Athenian shoemaker who had the honour of working for Alcibides, earned more money in a year than thou can'st in thy wretched life. Mark me well!"

Madeleine, from this volley of learned reminiscences, concluded that the tall man in a blanket, who did nothing but talk of Alcibiades, must be a maniac.

"But surely, you have brought the suit which the marquis has condescended to order of your husband?" resumed Dominique. "Bear this well in mind; let him be doubly attentive and dexterous in completing these garments, for on them his prospects as a tailor depend! If he gives satisfaction to my pupil, his fortune is made Let's

sce, where is the suit?" and Dominique advanced gravely towards Madeleine.

The latter rose in haste from her chair, ready to tear out the eyes of him she conceived to be a lunatic. "Don't come near me, or I 'll break your head with the umbrella!" cried she.

"You are mad, my dear lady — who thinks of offering you violence? You have not brought the suit then?" resumed Dominique, in a milder tone.

"Brought the suit indeed! why, what impudence!" said Madeleine, who felt a little reassured at his change of voice. "Certainly not; and it is not my fault that your pupil has that on his back which my blockhead of a husband sold him, and for which I come to demand payment: for, I repeat it, I stay here till I am paid. If not, there is, thank Heaven, room enough yet for rogues in the Fort-l'Eveque. When a man has not the cash to pay for fine clothes, he ought, in spite of his title of marquis, to wear such as he can pay for, and not rob poor tradesmen of their time and material."

At this moment a light step was heard on the stairs. "'Tis the marquis!" cried Dominique.

"Ah! now the sport begins!" exclaimed dame Madeleine.

"My dear madam," said Dominique in a suppliant tone, "spare him; on the faith of Dominique, you shall be paid."

"Fiddlestick! Now for a sight of this contraband marquis!" As she spoke, the door was slowly opened, and the marquis entered.

"I have not the heart to witness this scene," said Dominique, trembling; and he retreated to his dark closet, shutting the door after him.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEBTOR.

At sight of the marquis, Madeleine bristled like a game fowl, and stared indignantly at the young man. The marquis de Letorière was then about twenty years of age. The portraits of him which are still extant, and the unanimous testimony of his contemporaries, agree in representing him as the beau ideal of all that is fascinating.

At that age, his proportions, which displayed the most exquisite symmetry, made him resemble the God of Love, rather than the Antinous of the Greeks.

All the treasures of ancient sculpture, it is said, offered nothing to be compared with the harmonious beauty of his form. Under this bewitching exterior, nature had hidden muscles of steel, the courage of a lion, a rare intellect, a noble soul, and a generous disposition.

His enchanting face was not characterised by a stern or manly beauty; but Fancy's self could never have sketched any thing so pretty; and the "pretty," at the period at which he lived, was a singularly appropriate style of beauty. The strength and stature of a Hercules would have been out of place, where men had cast off the barb and helmet. A grave and dignified air would have been ill-timed, when the imposing perukes, or rather lion-manes of Louis XIV. were no longer in vogue.

If rose-scented powder, lace, ribbons, silk and jewelry, became Letorière so well, it was that his features and whole demeanour had an almost feminine grace, in admirable keeping with the almost effeminate elegance of the dress and decorations of the men of that age. If he possessed in the highest degree the art of pleasing and captivating, it was that his bewitching countenance could alternately express ingenuity, satire, dignity, daring, tenderness and melancholy.

It was said by his contemporaries, that the look and tone of voice of this remarkable man had an irresistible charm and power, which the advocates of a certain new science would doubtless attribute to magnetic attraction.

But, at the time of which we speak, the marquis was but a friendless youth, and whether "magnetic" or not, his attractive power was about to be submitted to a severe test by the tailor's wife. Madeleine felt her anger effervescing at the sight of her debtor.

The rain had drenched him, his hands were blue with cold, and his forehead was almost hidden by the damp curls of his fine chesnut hair, which he then wore unpowdered. When he saw Madeleine, he could not help betraying an expression of surprise and chagrin; however, he accosted her politely, and fixing upon her his full black eyes, at once sad and soft, he said to her in his accustomed silvery tone: "What is your business with me, madam?"

"I want you to pay me for the coat you have on your back; for it belongs to me—to me and my husband, Landry, tailor to Monsieur le marquis," replied Madeleine peevishly, and surveying her debtor insolently from head to foot.

A blush of shame overspread the young man's cheek, an expression of impatience appeared in the contraction of his brow; but he repressed this emotion and answered mildly:

"I am so unfortunate as not to have it in my power to pay you yet, madame—"

"Not in your power, eh?—that's easily said, but I don't take such coin as that. When people have not the means of paying

for their clothes, they should order none. I'll not go hence till I have my money;" and Madeleine seated herself without ceremony, whilst Letorière remained standing.

"Listen to me, madam. In a month from this, I am sure of being able to satisfy you, upon the faith of a gentleman. Only have the kindness to grant me this delay—I beseech you."

The words "I beseech you," were pronounced with an inflexion of voice so noble and yet so touching, that Madeleine, already moved by the deep distress which he seemed to bear so heroically, feared lest her compassion should be awakened. She resolved to arrest this feeling at once, and had recourse to vulgar insult in answer to the petition of her debtor.

"A great security, the faith of such a gentleman as you! What should I do with it, think you?"

"Madam!" cried the marquis; then checking himself, he continued in a voice of dignified sadness: "Madam, it is cruel in you to speak to me thus. You are a woman—I owe you money—I am here in my own apartment. How can I answer you? Do not then strive to render more painful a situation in which, I pray, you may never be placed!"

"But you'll have no more money at the month's end than now," said Madeleine, harshly. "That's a mere tale!"

"If my uncle, the abbe du Vighan, to whom I purpose making an application, be not returned from Hanover in a month, I will enlist for a soldier, and the bounty money shall be faithfully remitted to you. You see, then, madam, that I can pledge my word as a gentleman, that you shall be paid."

The marquis spoke of this desperate resolve with so much dignity, and in an accent the sincerity of which was so apparent, that Madeleine, somewhat moved, repented of having gone so far, and replied: "I don't wish to force you to enlist, not I, but I do want to be paid; the account has been standing long enough. Sell something—you then—"

"Sell any thing here, madam?" and with a disconsolate look, he directed her attention to his cold and scantily furnished lodging.

At this gesture so sadly significant, Madeleine cast down her eyes, her heart sank within her, but yet she added hesitatingly, and pointing to the two gilt frames: "Why, yes, these two pictures?—"

"These pictures," said the marquis with a dignified earnestness, "are all that I possess of what once belonged to my parents, whose portraits they are; and for the first time they see their son blush for his poverty."

These words led Madeleine to compare the interior of her own abode, which was at least one of comfort, with this chilly apartment, the wretched retreat of a gentleman (for the claims of gentle blood had not yet been called in question): she felt her anger turning almost into pity; especially, when she perceived that the young marquis trembled with cold in his wet clothing.

In violent temperaments, extremes meet; dame Landry, ever since her departure from the shop, had given the irritation of her feelings no chance of abating; this paroxysm could not last: like all over-wrought passions, her anger fell flat (if we may be allowed the expression), at the first reflection which her heart, naturally good, suggested.

The marquis was so handsome! he had replied to her abuse in so sad and yet dignified a tone; he seemed to be suffering so much from cold—he who had doubtless been nursed in the lap of luxury—that the good woman, experiencing, moreover, the resistless attraction of this singular personage, passed without any very apparent transition from insult to respect, from harshness to commiseration. She readjusted her head-dress, stammered out a few unintelligible words, and disappeared, to the great surprise of the marquis.

The old tutor, who only awaited the termination of this conference in order to leave his den, half opened the closet-door, and said:

"Is that vile harpy gone at last? Pardon me for so basely retreating before the enemy."

"Were you there, my good Dominique? Well! you have heard—oh! God, what humiliation! To be regarded by that woman as void of honesty! Oh! 'tis horrible. Dominique, I am resolved, unless my uncle return in time, to enter the service. I will pay this cursed debt with the price of my enlistment, and thus, at least, I shall not have to blush—"

"What! enlist and renounce your brilliant hopes?"

"They are but delusions! I went again to the palace to-day—there is no hope. In order to continue the suit against the German princes, or the intendancy of Haintonge, it would be requisite to deposite with the attorney, more money than I shall ever possess; I abandon it. But hold, Dominique—I do not feel well—I am cold;" and the marquis sank trembling upon the edge of his bed.

"Poor child! I do not wonder," said the tutor with a sigh. "To be exposed to this chilling rain, to return and not find a spark of fire, and for a welcome home to receive the insults of this wretch, whom I would fain thrust into the chimney in place of a fagot — for, alas! as to wood — Heaven knows, if I could—"

"Enough, good Dominique," said Letorière, placing a finger on his lips. "Have you not already done too much for me? Have you not abandoned your class—your profession?"

"And did not Socrates, the sage, the great philosopher, leave all, and follow Alcibiades! Only, as it was not so cold at Athens as at Paris, Socrates had not the mortification to see his pupil shaking with an ague-fit. But come, take my advice and lie down—take off your wet clothes—you will be warmer in bed"

"You are right, Dominique; for I do not know, but—I think this is fever that I feel—"

"Well, well! there is nothing left to suffer now; to see you fall sick completes my misery!" Then turning round with an angry air, Dominique exclaimed, as he stretched forth his clenched fist towards the door through which Madeleine had made her exit.—"'Tis you! then, cursed sorceress! with your ill-timed railing, who have brought this calamity on my unhappy pupil! Why did I not spurn you from the door?"

In the midst of Dominique's apostrophe, the door opened, and the tutor saw, to his astonishment, a porter bringing in two enormous faggots, and some bundles of vine-branch kindling.

"You are mistaken, my man; this wood is not for us," said Dominique, with a sigh.

"Does not the marquis de Letorière live here, my good sir?"

"He does."

"Well, then, the wood is for him. The big lady with a brown hood told me she was coming back again with some live coals, and the things to make an egg posset, for the marquis."

"The big lady in a brown hood?" demanded Dominique, with amazement.

"Yes, sir: the same that paid me for the wood."

"That paid you for the wood? Do you hear that, my worthy pupil? You are going to have a fire!" cried Dominique, turning towards Letorière, who, being already in a burning fever, had betaken himself to his bed.

In happy season, dame Landry herself came, with a look of confusion, to solve this enigma. The worthy housewife carried in one hand, a coffee-pot full of boiling water, and in the other, some burning coals upon a shovel.

When the porter was gone, observing how pale the marquis looked, she exclaimed:

"Poor young gentleman! he has the fever—that's certain. 'Tis the effect of cold—and I—ought I not to have been ashamed to keep him in conversation, whilst he was shuddering so!—Come, come! don't stand there staring at me like a wax figure, my dear sir. Lay some wood on the hearth—light the fire, whilst I break the eggs to make the posset with. Have you at least such a thing as a clean cup?" Then approaching the bed, she laid her hand on the thin coverlet. "Gracious heaven! why Monsieur le marquis is not half covered—go and fetch two or three warm blankets for his feet. And his head is much too low; he must have a pillow. Quick! bring one hither. What! this recess has no curtains? nor the windows either? You must see that the light hurts the marquis's eyes. Come! bestir yourself; I can't do every thing."

The honest tutor to whom all these hasty orders were addressed, stood gaping with astonishment before Madeleine, and striving to explain to himself the cause of this sudden change in her. Presently he burst into the following soliloquy: "'Tis his charm! the charm that nature has endowed him with, which operates. He seduces the tailoress, as Alcibiades did Timea, the wife of Agis, king of Lacedemon; and that, too—without detriment to virtue; a conquest doubly honourable on that account! My dear madam, I must confess, we have unfortunately neither pillow, curtain, nor blanket," said Dominique, sadly.

"What wretchedness!" said the softened Madeleine to herself. Then observing that the professor was still wrapped in his toga, she cried, "well, then, until we can get something better for the bed, give me that blanket, instead of muffling yourself up in it like a masquerader before Lent; are you not ashamed, a man of your age?" and the dame laid violent hands on the skirt of Dominique's 'extemporaneous' toga. But he, forcibly resisting her attempt to divest him of his garment, exclaimed: "Listen to me, my good lady; pray, forbear—don't pull so hard. 'Tis a matter of propriety—I will impart it to you, who are of an age to hear such communications, and moreover the wife of a tailor;" and, Dominique added, in an under tone, "my small-clothes, as our fore-fathers would have said, being absolutely unfit for longer service, and having no robe de chambre, I am obliged to substitute this species of Roman mantle for a more convenient article of dress."

"Is it possible?" said Madeleine, hastily dropping the end of the blanket. "If that is the case, I must send Landry to you this evening." She then continued in a low voice, as she added fuel to the clear bright fire which sent its cheering warmth through the desolate room: "Is the marquis asleep? if not, let him drink this;" and she gave him a cup of the warm posset she had prepared. Dominique approached the bed on tip-toe. "How do you feel now?" said he to his pupil.

"I am cold—my head aches," answered the latter, in a feeble voice. "But what fire is this? How is it that we have a fire?"

"The charm you possess has procured it from this good and worthy woman. There's an excellent beverage, too, which she prepared, and which you must drink while it is hot. Be of good cheer, then! Your star,

at length, is in the ascendant; I see it beaming through the respectable physiognomy of madam Landry."

The marquis, tortured by an excruciating headache, understood but little of what Dominique was saying, and least of all, of the rising star he alluded to; however, he took the cup, drank its contents, and fell into a sound sleep. The good woman then approached the bed with a noiseless step, tucked in the clothes with all the care of a mother, and having done so, seated herself by the side of Dominique.

"Be generous, and pardon me, Sir," said she; "I have just been very insolent to M. le Marquis; but do you see, my husband had provoked me; I must say, too, that I had never seen the poor gentleman before! So young, so pretty, and without either father or mother too—and then a nobleman like him to be unable to buy fuel in the middle of winter, when we poor working people have a good warm stove! Indeed, I shall always reproach myself for having dared to speak insultingly to the marquis; but rest assured that, as long as Madeleine Landry lives, she will ever hereafter be his very humble servant. In short, Sir," (and the good woman cast down her eyes as she took a small purse from her pocket,) "on my way hither, I was paid a bill of 300 livres—you see the marquis is bed-ridden, he will perhaps need something, a physician even; to him I should never have dared to propose it, but with you I can make bold to do so. Here, Sir, we will charge this to his account, and pray forget the ugly words I have spoken."

"On that score, we are perfectly even, my dear lady: you called me an owl, I called you an osprey, so no more of that; but as for this loan, I am bound to inform you that it is uncertain when the Abbè Vighan, my pupil's uncle, may return; and that it may not be in our power, for some time to come, to repay you what you so generously offer to advance; but after the scene which I have witnessed this morning, I should be afraid—"

"Say no more about it, Sir, or I shall sink with shame, upon my word, I shall. M. le Marquis will pay us when he is able; thank Heaven! sixty pistoles will neither make nor break us."

"I will be responsible for this debt then, myself, my good lady; my half-yearly income from the 'salt-excise,' will be your security for the amount."

"Well, so let it be then; methinks I am now almost pardoned for my insolence. I'll now go home and fetch all that the marquis stands in need of, and come every day, if you will allow me, and be his nurse; for you men know nothing about taking care of the sick, if I may say so without offence to you, Sir."

Thereupon Madeleine left Dominique with his young charge, and to the enjoyment of a cheerful fire, which had not been the old man's lot for many a day.

CHAPTER IV.

MYSTERIES.

The indisposition of M. de Letorière was drawing to an end; he was almost convalescent, thanks to the unremitting assiduity of Madeleine, her husband, and their apprentice Kraft, who one and all seemed anxious to rival the devotion of the good Dominique. The marquis evinced so much unaffected thankfulness for these touching manifestations of their sympathy, he seemed so to justify, nay, merit them, by his delicacy and goodness of heart, that the tailor and his wife felt an ever increasing attachment for their "pretty noble," as they called the marquis.

Spring was approaching: one day, Dominique, who had gone out for the purpose of persuading an attorney to follow up one of Letorière's suits at law, returned with a countenance of joyful surprise; the apprentice Kraft followed, carrying an immense basket of fruit and exotic flowers. Upon a small label pinned to a magnificent pine-apple, were written the words; "To M. le Marquis de Letorière." After having gazed at this charming present with childish curiosity and admiration, and tried in vain to trace whence it came, (for an unknown person had left the basket with the porter,) the marquis substituted for the address it bore, the following; "To my kind friends, Landry and his wife," and directed Kraft to convey the fruit and flowers to their destination.

"You will tell them that I know not whence I have received this gift, but it is the first and only return I can yet make them, and I send it as a token of my eternal gratitude."

At the expiration of a few days came yet another surprise; in a beautiful writing-desk which was left with the porter by a boy from the establishment of Bordier, a celebrated cabinet maker, was found a note to this effect: "Your heart confirms the opinion that has been formed of you.—'Tis well.—Send these letters to their address." In one of the compartments of the desk, Letorière found two sealed letters, on one of which was written, "To Mr. Landry, Tailor, at the Golden Shears;" and on the other; "To Mr. Buston, Attorney, at the Chatelet."

The latter was a worthy limb of the law

to whom the marquis had confided the prosecution of his suits; but who had as yet, declined taking any steps thereon, for fear of having the costs upon his own shoulders.

Letorière and Dominique gazed at each other in amazement.

"What did I tell you?" cried the ex-professor. "Will you believe me now? or will you still mistrust your destiny? The son of Clinias had not a brighter one!"

Bewildered by this adventure, of the issue of which he could form no idea, the marquis bade Dominique deliver the attorney's letter according to the address, and sent that of Master Landry by his porter. In an hour afterwards, the tailor, Madeleine, and his apprentice, were on their knees before the young nobleman.

"Thanks to you, monsieur le Marquis, I have now the patronage of my lord the Duke de Bourbon!" cried Landry; "a nett income of six thousand livres per annum! I'm a rich man for life!"

"Thanks to you, monsieur le Marquis, our neighbour Mathurin, who was walking off with all our custom, may now go hang himself in a fit of envy," said Madeleine.

"Thanks to you, monsieur le marquis, my mistress, no longer worried by the falling off of our trade, will now let my ears alone!" said Martin Kraft.

"My friends," replied Letorière, "I am delighted at your good fortune; but believe me, I regret having no concern in, or knowledge of the matter."

"Nay, monsieur le Marquis, how can you say so?" exclaimed Madeleine reproachingly; and taking the precious missive from her pocket, she read: "Master Landry is notified, that at the express recommendation of M. le Marquis de Letorière, H. R. H. the Duke de Bourbon pleases to appoint him to the office of tailor to his person and household. See there! M. le Marquis!" resumed Madeleine, and looking at Letorière with eyes bathed in joyous tears, she continued: "This employment makes our fortune, and yet, on the faith of an honest woman, the basket of flowers and the note that M. le Marquis had the kindness to send us yesterday, gave us still more pleasure."

"So far you are right, my friends," said Letorière; "it was I that sent you that present, which I received from an unknown source. But I knew nothing of the contents of the letter which was handed to you today; it is a mystery I cannot fathom."

At this moment, Dominique entered with every feature wrought up to an unusual expression: he had ascended the long staircase so precipitately that he could scarcely speak; the only intelligible words he uttered were,—"Rich, rich—the attorney—the law suit—I told you so!" and he threw himself upon the neck of his pupil in the most dramatic style.

"My good Dominique, compose yourself," said the marquis. "Tell me the glad tidings which transport you thus."

"Yes, by heaven! glad tidings indeed," said the ex-professor, still panting for breath. "Just imagine me arrived at the office of this Buston,—this bird of prey—your attorney. When the clerks see me enter the study, they begin their indecent raillery, as usual, at my expense. I treat them with *Socratic* scorn, and ask for Mr. Buston. According to custom the saucy knaves answer me in chorus, and in every variety of tune, 'not at home! not at home!' In the midst of this infernal outcry, I approach the head clerk, and show him my letter,—Oh! if you had seen his face!" cried Dominique, bursting into a fit of merriment, and slapping his knees.

"Well, well! go on," urged the marquis.

"Well! the head clerk had his mouth already open, to re-echo the insolent bantering of the rest, but as soon as he recognised the hand-writing, he became as serious as an ass under the operation of the curry-comb, imposed silence on his comrades, and rising respectfully, addressed me thus: 'Allow me the honour, Mr. Dominique, of conducting you to my patron.' Upon being brought into the presence of the lawyer, who had hitherto treated me with insolence, or made himself invisible, another scene takes place! The vulture becomes a turtle-dove, and having read the letter, commenced cooing to this effect: 'I have never for an instant doubted as to the favourable result of the marquis's suit, versus the intendance of Haintonge, in relation to the woods of Brion.—This letter removes the only difficulties in the prosecution of that affair, to which I will at once turn my attention; in the mean time the documents regarding the grand suit against the German princes, shall be put in order. I have, moreover, such confidence in the goodness of M. Le Marquis's cause, that I am willing, sir, to make him an advance of twenty thousand livres—a sum not amounting to one-fifth of what he will recover, without doubt, from the intendancy of Haintonge.'"

"This is a dream!—a dream!"—said the marquis, pressing his hands to his brow.

"On my conscience, it seemed so then to me; and to assure myself of the reality of what I saw, I accepted Master Buston's offer, as your authorised representative."

"Well?" interposed Letorière.

"Well!" said Dominique, handing a pocket-book to the marquis, "having taken my individual receipt, he presented me these 20,000 livres in drafts at sight on the 'ferme générale.'"

It would be impossible to paint the joy and surprise of all the actors in this scene.

With reiterated thanks and blessings the tailor and his suite withdrew.

The marquis, when alone with Dominique, wearied himself with vain conjectures as to the source of this mysterious patronage. Bordier, the cabinet maker, could give no information respecting the purchaser of the writing desk. The attorney maintained a dogged silence in regard to the contents, as well as to the writer, of the letter which had led him to take so different a view of the marquis's lawsuit. The secretary of M. le duc de Bourbon, who was next applied too, stated that his highness had himself ordered the appointment of Master Landry to the tailorship of his household.

When the marquis was fully restored to health, he hired, in company with Dominique, a small apartment in the faubourg Saint-Germaine. The honest Jerome Sicard, the coach-driver who had insisted on giving the marquis a gratuitous ride, because he looked "so like a good angel," was installed, to his great joy, as valet de chambre. This indeed was the only reward he solicited, when asked by the marquis in what manner he could cancel his obligation to him. We need not add that Sicard, Master Landry and his wife, were generously recompensed for their kindness.

It was a singular fact that none of the good deeds of the marquis escaped the notice of his mysterious benefactor. A little note would arrive by post containing such words as these:—"'Tis well—go on—you are watched." At other times, he would receive advice dictated by the soundest wisdom; he was urged to enjoy the pleasures of the world befitting his time of life, but to preserve inviolate the uprightness and purity of his character; for "he was counted upon hereafter."

Then again Letorière was reminded that the exercises of the Gymnasium were worthy of a nobleman. He adopted the suggestion, and soon excelled in fencing, riding, and all such feats as require activity and flexibility of limb.

At times these billets, which revealed a thoughtful and increasing tenderness, reached the marquis in a manner at once pleasing and unexpected. Now neatly deposited in an elegant vase de Sevre, filled with flowers, which an unknown messenger delivered to the porter; then again, in an envelope of satin, with his initials and arms curiously embroidered upon it, which he found in his pocket on returning from a tennis-court.

This singular correspondence had continued for about a year, when Letorière gained his suit against the intendancy of Haintonge.

On the day after this judgment was pronounced, a groom, clad in the livery of the marquis. brought him a pair of splendid English horses, of a breed which had lately come into vogue. Their harness and housings were of the most costly and elegant kind. A letter, couched in the following terms, accompanied this new gift:

"Your suit is gained, you may now live as it becomes a gentleman of your rank Go to Cherin the genealogist; he will draw up your titles of nobility, which you will deposite on the "architable," so as to be presented to the king and received at court. As you will doubtless have the honour of attending his majesty in the chase, these horses will be of service to you.—You still continue to please."

To all the questions which Letorière put to the groom, he could get no other answer than, that a stranger had bought the animals of Gabert, a famous horse dealer of that period, telling him that he would send the harness for them after a while. The stranger, he added, was dressed in black, was rather stout, and about fifty years old. Some time after this new surprise, the marquis received a note to this effect.

"Go this morning to the ball at the Opera; stop at the 'king's corner,' between 12 and 1 o'clock; wear a black domino, and fasten a blue and white ribbon to it."

Letorière had never been at an Opera ball in his life. His habits were by no means those of a recluse, but his time had hitherto been engrossed by gymnastic exercises, walks with Dominique, protracted readings of the Greek and Latin poets, and frequent visits to the Comedie Française. Although Dominique had no great knowledge of the human heart, he at times felt a little uneasy at seeing his pupil remain so calmly sedate at an age in which the passions usually manifest themselves with so much violence; the thought had crossed his mind that the mysterious friend of the marquis was a woman; but he had never hinted this suspicion to Letorière.

When the latter informed Dominique that he was going to the Opera, the ex-professor conceived the happy idea of accompanying his pupil. Letorière acceded with great pleasure to his wish, and they set out together.

When fairly in the midst of the crowd, the two friends, as much out of their element as a pair of newly arrived provincials, had a world of trouble to find the "king's corner," and soon presented an object of raillery to the initiated: the marquis with his slender waist, elegant gait, pretty foot, and delicate hands, might be easily taken for a woman; whilst the tall, gaunt, and awkward Dominique passed muster as the husband.

Letorière reddened with anger under his mask, and it required all the authority and entreaties of Dominique to prevent him from betraying his excitement.

At length two dominos accosted them.

The taller figure caught Dominique by

the arm, whilst the other approaching Letorière, whispered in his ear:—"Go on, your course pleases—persevere and hope."

The marquis perceived that a small box had been slipped into his hand; but without allowing him time for a word or gesture, the domino disappeared in the crowd.

Letorière stood like one enchanted. The voice which had whispered in his ear the very words that his unknown protector had so often written, was that of a female, and sweet beyond description; he fancied, too, that he saw a pair of full blue eyes beaming through the silken mask.

Intoxicated with joy, and with a thousand new emotions awakened within him, the marquis completely forgot Dominique, and conceived the preposterous idea of finding his domino, and distinguishing, amongst a thousand, the large blue eyes which had rested upon his with so singular an expression of tenderness. At 5 o'clock in the morning, he discovered how vain was the search: and returned home, impatient to ascertain what were the contents of the box.

He found therein one of those large seal-rings, at that time very fashionable; it was studded with diamonds, and had a charming blue eye in the midst of a cloud, delicately enamelled upon it, and so full of expression, that Letorière instantly recognised the soft and tender glance of his domino. On the ring was inscribed in microscopic characters: "Il vous suit partout,"—"It follows you everywhere." The letter ran thus:—

"You are twenty years of age; with youth, beauty, rank, wit, and grace, you have wealth enough to be lavish. Your future is in your own hands.—There is one who wishes to see whether the counsels that have been given you for a year will continue to bring forth their proper fruits—these communications will now be discontinued—you are master of your actions—but you are everywhere followed. In four years from this date, however your conduct may have answered the expectations that are formed of you, you will receive a letter.—Till then, courage!—hope on and persevere."

For a month the curiosity of the marquis had well nigh crazed him. He hurried like a lunatic through the public walks, anxiously scanning all the blue eyes he met, and comparing them with that on his ring; many of these drooped their heads timidly before his eager and restless gaze, others looked languishingly at him, and not a few lighted up with anger, but nothing could he discover.

He recollected that he had been ordered to leave his titles of nobility upon the "architable," in order to be received at court; he complied with the requisite formalities, and awaited the return of a distant relation, M. le Comte d'Apreville, to have the honour of being presented to king Louis XV.

CHAPTER V.

THE CAVALIER.

The marquis, unable to divest himself of the idea that he was deserted by his mysterious protectress, was one day walking along the edge of the grand canal of Versailles, in a fit of sad and lonely musing. He had come from the riding school, and an appropriate costume greatly enhanced the elegance of his form. This consisted of a green coat with gold lace, scarlet small-clothes, a vest of the same color, and high boots of shining black morocco, the tops of which were of fine lawn. Letorière saw, at the distance of a few paces from him, a cavalier beyond the middle age, who, in spite of every effort, could not induce his steed to pass by a marble pedestal.

Two persons were watching this contest, one of whom, in a coat of pearl-grey taffety, with silk frogs of the same color, might be from 50 to 60 years of age, and had a countenance at once handsome, noble, and benevolent; he was arm-in-arm with another, whose slight and somewhat bending form showed him to be his senior, who was superbly dressed in the old style of the Regency, and had a pale face, deeply furrowed with wrinkles.

The gentleman who was more plainly dressed than his companion, observed, as he pointed to Letorière:

"What a charming face!—what a pretty form and gait! I never saw any thing more enchanting—did you, marechal?"

"Hem—hem!" said the latter, with a dry cough. "What, that little jockey there? He's not bad-looking—rather green, though—he'd do well enough to carry holy water," answered M. le duc de Richelieu, who had kept up the old habit of using slang phrases and vulgar pronunciation, which prevailed among the rouès of the Regency.

"A saint like you might find employment, then, for his pretty face; you, who are so liberal of court promises—your holy water, as you call it!" said the other, in a tone of satire.

The horse was still restive; the rider, tired of gentle means, had recourse to the whip and spur, which only caused the animal to rear and kick in a formidable manner.

M. de Richelieu and the other walker gradually approached the marquis, who, seeing two persons of respectable age advancing towards him, saluted them respectfully.

"Well! young man—which will come off best in this wrangle—the horse or the rider?" said the friend of M. de Richelieu.

"Upon my word, sir, I hardly know! The equerry's arguments are lashes, to

which the horse replies by kicks. Such a conversation may last long."

At this reply, given without any undue assurance, and yet with the confident gayety of youth, the stranger smiled.

"Talking is easy, my young master. I should like to see you in the equerry's seat. You don't know that that beast is a Ukraine mare. She is just imported from Germany, and is a real devil. La Guerinière himself can do nothing with her."

"If I were in the equerry's seat, sir, I might be more fortunate, although not more expert," said the marquis, resolutely.

"Indeed! well! will you try? will you mount Barbara?"

"The mare is so handsome—so noble—notwithstanding her restiveness—that I accept your offer with pleasure, sir; besides, the grass is so thick here, that I desire no better carpet to roll upon," answered Letorière, with animation.

"With a physiognomy and form like his, the sly rogue is a match for horses, men or women—and his falls are as harmless to himself as cat-leaps."

"Halloo! Saint Clair," cried the other, addressing the equerry, "don't worry yourself any longer; dismount. This young gentleman has a mind for a lesson, if you will give him one," he added, laughing.

Saint Clair obeyed the order, and dismounted.

Somewhat offended at the close of the stranger's speech, Letorière replied with respectful firmness:

"I shall always receive with pleasure or submission the lessons which I may ask for or deserve, sir; but I am not not aware of having placed myself in a position for either, at this moment."

The stranger and M. de Richelieu looked at each other, with a strong effort to restrain their laughter.

"Take care," said the marechal, in an under tone, "he's real game, I'll warrant!"

"You'll see he is going to give me a challenge, and that before you, too, the senior marechal of France, and president of the court of honor," said the other; and looking very seriously at Letorière, he added: 'Your tone is rather high, young master!"

"By Heaven! my tone is as it should be, sir!" retorted the marquis, throwing himself into an attitude of defiance.

At this implied threat, M. de Richelieu and the stranger laughed immoderately, and Letorière's anger was rising in proportion, when Saint-Clair, who had not without difficulty dismounted, approached hat in hand, and said to the gentleman dressed in grey: "Sire, nothing can ever be made of this mare."

"The king!" cried the confused marquis; and he knelt before him, and inclined his head with an air of deep contrition.

"By Saint Louis, my young friend," said the monarch with a smile, "we have known the time when your attitude would have made us feel that all gentlemen are our equals;—the olden time when a cavalier might break a lance with his sovereign."

"Ah! Sire, pardon—pardon—

"Rise, gentle paladine;"—and with that majestic grace which marked the slightest actions of this, the wittiest and most amiable of kings, he gently patted the cheek of the offender, who still kneeling, kissed the royal hand with profound veneration.

Letorière rose, his face burning with blushes which only served to heighten its beauty, whilst tears stood in his fine dark eyes, so deeply sensible was he of what he deemed the unspeakable kindness of his king.

This youthful emotion, pure and ingenuous as it was, gratified Louis beyond measure; the most adroit flattery would have failed to make so pleasing an impression.

"What is your name, my son?" he asked, looking with interest at the marquis.

"Charles Louis de Vighan, Marquis de Letorière, Sire."

"De Haintonge," said the king, who was remarkably familiar with the genealogy of his nobles.

"But you have deposited your titles?" he added; "you ought to have been presented to me—why has this not been done?"

"Sire, I was awaiting the return of my relative, M. le comte d'Apreville—to be thus honoured."

"Maréchal de Richelieu—will you be his sponsor?" asked the king, turning towards the duke, who replied by a respectful bow.

"Come, my son," resumed Louis, "I do not forget that you almost criticised Saint Clair—you owe him some sort of satisfaction.—Will you venture to back the vicious Barbara?" and he pointed to the mare, which in spite of all the threats or coaxing of the equerry who held her, still shied and reared as before.

"Are you not afraid of this mettlesome charger?"

"I fear but one thing, Sire, and that is, to prove unworthy of the gracious kindness with which the king honours me in ordering me to ride for his pleasure."

"Why, he is perfectly fascinating! What grace, what exquisite tact in all his replies," said Louis to M. de Richelieu, as Letorière, with a throbbing heart, drew near to the redoubted Barbara.

"The king tells me sometimes that I am a dabster at reading frontispieces; well! let me tell your majesty aforehand that this young fawn here will be full-fledged in less than six months. And then, look out for him, for he'll turn out a real dove-killer, and no mistake."

"Under your auspices I doubt it not, marechal," said the king, smiling; then with a sudden feeling of real alarm, he exclaim-

ed: "Sir! the unlucky youth will kill himself—Saint Clair,—why did you not hold her till he was in the saddle?"

"Sire," returned the old equerry in a surly tone, "the gentleman told me he could do without my help"—

"And by heaven! he has done so"—said the astonished king; "but look, marechal, on my honor, this is sorcery! There now! he approaches her, and she does not stir.—He caresses her, and the hussey no longer acknowledges it by a kick or bite. What say you to that, Saint Clair?"

"Why, Sire, I say—I—I know not what to say. We have always been obliged to make use of a blind bridle in order to mount her; she is shy and skittish" —

"And there he is in the saddle, I vow!" said the now delighted monarch, "and how beautifully he sits! what grace, what suppleness of limb! what think you of him—Richelieu!—and you Saint Clair?" asked Louis, whose face lighted up with pleasure at the skill of his young protegé.

"Troth and I must say, the young shaver sits well; but there's some hocus pocus about him, or he'd never have tamed the kicking beast," answered the marechal.

"It cannot be said, that the gentleman's attitude is absolutely bad, Sir," said old Saint Clair. "He sits firmly; his body and legs are well placed; he seems to have a light, yet steady hand—

"And what the plague would you have now?" interposed the king. "But let us see whether she will pass by the statue that frightened her so much. No, no, she refuses,—what plunges!—Alas! poor youth!"

"He's screwed himself to the saddle, I think. The deuse a bit will he budge," cried the marechal; "for all his baby face, he's a very Hercules."

"Your lordship knows it is nothing to stand the prancing of a horse — the science consists in foreseeing and preventing it," observed Saint Clair.

"In that case, you must be satisfied now," resumed the king; "for see! she passes by the statue as quietly as an ambling pad pony — Well then! he is a sorcerer," cried Louis XV., looking with surprise at the no less astonished maréchal and Saint Clair.

Letorière, having made the mare repeatedly pass and repass before the statue that had frightened her, rode towards the king. In one hand he held his hat, and with the other reined in Barbara, who chafed and champed her bit with all the coquetry imaginable; indeed she seemed proud of the easy burthen which she bore. The countenance of this young noble, flushed with exercise, and the proud satisfaction of having acquitted himself so well before the king, was radiant with happiness and beauty.

Louis XV. surveyed the face of his young protegé with that calm and melancholy interest which men advanced in age or sated with pleasures often feel in contemplating the unrestrained joy and fond ardour of youth.

This worthy prince felt happy, that he had the power of indulging a generous caprice, in opening to our young marquis a path of life as brilliant as that of the hero of a fancy tale. "It's good sometimes to be a king!" said he to M. de Richelieu, with an involuntary burst of tenderness.

The old marechal appeared to scrutinise the young king's looks, before he replied, in order to catch the sense of an exclamation which he understood not. All was dead within that heart worn out by a narrow, yet masterless ambition, and hardened by unrelenting selfishness; incapable of penetrating the king's intention, the marechal replied by an insipid court compliment:—"If it is sometimes good to be a king, Sire, it's always good to be a subject of your majesty."

Louis XV. answered coldly and with a sarcastic smile: "It is likewise a pleasure to find ourselves so well understood." Then turning to Letorière, who still awaited his commands: "Well, my boy, how did you contrive to tame that unruly animal so quickly and easily?"

"Your Majesty told me that the mare was imported from Germany; knowing then that the Germans talk very much to their horses, and direct them almost as much by word of mouth as with the hand or spur, I spoke to her in German; and have no doubt that she recognised the language as being familiar to her ear; for she became gentle almost instantaneously."

"He is right. Nothing can be simpler than that—don't you see, Saint Clair?" said the king.

"Nothing, Sire," interposed Letorière timidly, and glancing at the old equerry, who seemed deeply humiliated; "nothing is simpler to one who knows how to speak German."

This rather bold reply was dictated by so delicate and generous a feeling, that Louis exclaimed with not a little emotion: "Well said, my boy—you are right; if my old friend here had understood German, he would have done as you did; but as it is now too late in life for him to learn it, and Barbara appears to have no taste for the French language, keep the mare, marquis de Letorière—'tis the king's gift."

The marquis returned a respectful salute.

"Richelieu, you will present him to-morrow, at my early levee;" then with a kind nod to Letorière, Louis XV. proceeded to the chateau.

On the morrow Letorière's official presentation took place; in a few days, the king made him his equerry, and shortly afterwards, granted him a cornetcy in the musqueteers.

From that moment Letorière "wore his blushing honours thick upon him," for the king's affection increased daily.

It would be tedious to relate how the favorite became, par excellence, the man of fashion; his progress, however, was easy and natural. In addition to the advantages of rank and personal attraction, his mental qualifications and virtues, Letorière displayed a refined taste in every thing. His choice of horses, furniture and dress, became the criterion of elegance and good taste. In short, at the expiration of four years, the poor runaway student from the college du Plessis had become one of the most shining noblemen at court; and, like all men endowed with superior faculties, at once excited admiration, envy, hatred, and even adoration.

It would be inconsistent with the moral tenor of this narrative to detail the numerous "bonnes fortunes," of which the marquis was the real or supposed hero, (for his discretion was as remarkable as his other rare qualities.)

This, however, was well known, that no one could justly reproach him with baseness or treachery in love. In two duels in which he was a principal, he displayed both valour and generosity; the only fault that could be justly laid to his charge, was a too profuse expenditure, which he was yet able to support by the successful issue of his suit against the intendancy of Soiton, and by the munificence of the king, who appointed him in rapid succession to the offices of honorary abbé of the Trinity of Vendoine, commander of the united orders of Saint Lazarus and Our Lady of Mount Carmel, colonel of horse, counsellor of state, and grand seneschal of Aunis.

Such was the prodigious height of fortune to which Letorière had attained, in about four years after his auspicious meeting with the king.

In the midst of all his successes, he had never forgotten the blue eyes that greeted him at the Opera, and every day he cast a sad glance at his ring.

Notwithstanding the motto, "Il vous suit partout," written under that orb of heavenly blue, which seemed to cast upon him a look of calm and tender confidence, the marquis feared that his mysterious protectress had entirely forgotten him. For four years he had received no tidings of her. He was sometimes apprehensive that his reputation as a man of pleasure, by arousing the just jealousy of his incognita, had alienated her from him forever; at other times he feared that absence or disease, if not death itself, had withdrawn from him the tokens of her singular affection.

A strange and inexplicable feeling had always rigorously deterred Letorière from flirting with blue eyes—whatever sacrifice of inclination he was thus called upon to make. He dreaded the profaning a passion which he pictured to himself as so unlike all others. The farther he advanced upon his flowery and perhaps too easy path of life, the oftener did he look back, with the idolatry of memory, if not with regret, upon that period of tranquil happiness, when the master feeling of his existence was the hope of receiving one of those letters in which the "dear unknown," had penned her lessons of wisdom.

He trembled as the fatal term expired which was to decide his destiny, by the receipt of a final letter.—This letter he received, in four years exactly to a day, after his interview at the Opera; and it ran thus:

"For five years I have loved you—followed you through weal and woe, watching the bright or dark phases of your changing destiny.—You are worthy of the heart I tender you with confidence.—I am an orphan, my hand is free, and I offer it to you. —No power on earth can shake my resolution to be yours. If you refuse to realise my fondest hopes, in the solitude of a cloister I will still offer up my daily prayer to Heaven, to grant you the happiness which I would have bestowed upon you.

JULIE DE SOISSONS,
PRINCESSE DE S*** C***."(1)

CHAPTER VI.

MADEMOISELLE DE SOISSONS.

M'LLE Victoire-Julie de Soissons, princess of S * * * C * * *, lived with her aunt, M'mlle la maréchale princess of Rohan-Soubise. The princess Julie, who was about 25 years of age, if not what is usually termed a "splendid beauty," was an eminently pleasing one; her person, which did not exceed the ordinary height, was eminently graceful. Although the fashion of wearing powder was then at its height, M'lle de Soissons used it sparingly, and that too with reluctance, upon her fine brown hair, which she chose to arrange with her own hands — a happy caprice which served to heighten the charms of her face. Her eyes were blue, her lips and teeth vied with the coral and the pearl, and the form of her face was that of a lengthened but graceful oval; her complexion, of deeper tint than that of a blonde, was yet so pure and fresh, that the eye would have rested with less pleasure on

(1) Urgent motives of propriety induce us to have recourse to asterisks for the filling up of the above names.

one of dazzling whiteness. The prevailing expression of her features was soft and sad.

Of a sensitive and reserved temperament, the slightest emotion called the mantling blush to her face and lovely neck.

At the recital of a tale of woe her eyes were instantly veiled with tears. Although a princess of the blood royal, no one felt less the pride of rank; the exactions of her elevated position were a burthen to her. Inclination would have led her to adopt habits of simplicity and retirement rather than the life of pomp, to which she felt herself condemned. Self-retired and proud — but with the pride of a soul which is conscious of its superiority, that which was but the effect of delicacy and timidity, passed for disdain, in the character of the princess Julie.

Vulgar, selfish or presuming natures, were her especial abhorrence. The most prominent trait in her character was her independence. Her frail exterior concealed a bold and resolute heart. No human power could influence her decisions, when she herself thought them founded upon reason and justice; and yet by a strange anomaly of character, notwithstanding her princely birth, her firmness, her nobleness of heart, and her mind stored with amiable accomplishments, the princess Julie usually manifested an inconceivable timidity of demeanor, even in presence of those who were her equals in nothing.

Although an orphan, and having lived for seven years with the maréchale de Rohan-Soubise, she felt no sort of sympathy with her relation. All the secrets of her heart were reserved for her nurse Martha, a kind and artless creature who had raised her, and loved her with the tenderness of a doting mother.

For five years, M'lle de Soissons had obstinately refused the most advantageous offers as to birth and fortune; for five years, she had loved the marquis.

Her kind heart, independent spirit, and her disposition, in which there was a slight touch of romance, could not remain insensible to the recital of the young nobleman's heroic bearing when under the pressure of abject poverty.

When Jérome Sicard went to deliver Letorière's message, after having carried him gratuitously to the Palais-Marchand, the reader will remember that a man stepped from the coach at the moment dame Landry's exasperation against the marquis was at its height. Curious to know the issue of the adventure, this person, who was no other than the steward of Madame de Rohan Soubise, paid a second visit to the "Golden Shears," and found dame Madeleine passionately eloquent in her debtor's praise. The steward related this singular fact to dame Martha, the princess Julie's nurse, with all the particulars relating thereto, and the latter, of course, communicated it to her mistress. Hence the lively interest which Julie soon took in the affairs of the marquis. During his sickness she often sent her faithful nurse, carefully disguised in a hood and mantle, to make inquiries concerning Dominique's pupil.

Again, when convalescent, de Letorière was visited by dame Martha, who brought him the basket of flowers and fruit that have been spoken of, in such a manner as to furnish no clue to the discovery of the donor, and was instructed to watch for his first coming out. The princess longed to see this charmer, who fascinated the most pedantic tutors, rebel tailoresses, and vulgar coachmen.

As a lady of her rank could not go out alone or on foot, she bade Martha inquire whether there happened to be a shop in the rue Saint Florentin where she might lie in ambuscade for the young marquis, under pretence of making purchases.

Now there chanced to be an obscure milliner's shop directly opposite de Letorière's lodging. Having ascertained at what hour he regularly walked out, Julie, however whimsical the idea might seem, directed one of her aunt's waiting-women to accompany her in her carriage to the strange milliner's, where she intended to order some caps.

She soon saw through the shop window the professor and his young charge.— There was so touching an expression of melancholy on the fine countenance of the young noble, and Dominique's care of him seemed so tender and paternal, that M'lle de Soissons was moved even to tears.

Having given her order, the princess desired to be driven to the Tuileries; where Letorière arrived soon after, and seated himself in a sunny spot with Dominique.

Now that she could survey at leisure the captivating face of the marquis, she felt a deep, and to her, novel emotion: her heart throbbed violently, she trembled, she blushed — she loved.

There is no doubt, from the singular character of the princess, that to her view the misfortune that pursued Letorière constituted his chief attraction. The generous heart of the young girl suggested that she was here called on to repair what she almost deemed the wrongs of destiny. Possessed of a considerable income, and sure of the fidelity and secresy of Brissot, who had been employed by the prince her father, she directed him to inquire into the marquis's affairs. Having done so, the steward wrote to the attorney, who happened to be his own, to go on with the law-suit, and to advance the necessary sums of money to the marquis. It was he, too, that procured Landry's promotion by means of a present to

one of the inferior officers of the duc de Bourbon, to whom such appointments were entrusted.

For a long time the princess contented herself with cherishing in secret reverie her rare and passionate fondness, with eagerly waiting for the rare opportunities that offered for seeing the marquis, and by writing to him from time to time. When by her secret intervention he had gained his suit, she resolved to leave him free to act, in order to satisfy herself of his worthiness. She wrote the few words which she handed to him at the opera, and awaited the result.—On the day of the marquis's presentation, M'lle de Soissons was in company with the Dauphine, and near enough to Louis XV. to hear him say to every one that approached him, as he pointed to his young protegé:—"Confess now, is he not charming?"

With what joy, with what pride did she regard this approval of her choice by the prince, who, as we have said, immediately appointed him to an office about his person.

M'lle de Soissons, who had previously cared little for court fetes and trips to Marly, thenceforward made her appearance on all these occasions. Louis soon admitted his young equerry to his military staff; and whether out for an airing, or engaged in the chase, he delighted in alluding to Letorière's grace and adroitness, and quoting his witty and delicate repartees.

Here we must notice another anomaly in the conduct of the princess.—The greater the progress of love in her heart, the more would she strive to avoid opportunities, not of meeting, but of making formal acquaintance with Letorière.

After a residence of two years at court, the favor and successes of the marquis were at their height. Love adventures were attributed to him; and yet, strange to say! M'lle de Soissons felt no jealousy. The proud and pure passion of the young girl emboldened her to disregard the ephemeral and gay amours in which the marquis was said to indulge. She felt so confident, so worthy of being fondly and exclusively loved, as soon as she should reveal her secret to him, that she turned almost a deaf ear to the details of his gallantries.

Julie determined to keep a watchful eye upon the object of her love, in order to judge if he were worthy of her. She thought it quite natural that such attractions as his should procure him conquests; but she desired to know whether his generosity and goodness of heart remained unimpaired in the midst of so many allurements. With lofty minds, the slightest evidence has due weight: every-day incidents furnish perhaps stronger proofs than striking and brilliant traits of devotion; the latter belong to the chapter of accidents: the former are habits. Three poor and obscure persons then had done Letorière real service in his days of misfortune: Dominique, the tailor, and his wife.

It was with infinite pleasure that M'lle de Soissons discovered that the marquis had not discarded Dominique, but treated him still with deferential kindness.

Often did Letorière detail with grateful pride the obligations he laboured under to these good people. A young man who remained undazzled by unparalleled success, who was still unpretending, kind and deeply thankful to his humble benefactors, must indeed possess a noble heart.

Julie's purpose was irrevocably fixed: she would frankly and boldly offer her hand to one whom she found so worthy.

No scruple as to birth or fortune should deter her; she was an orphan, and considered herself at liberty to select her husband. Utterly regardless of the reasons which her aunt urged daily, to prove the necessity of certain alliances to her, a princess of the blood royal, Julie answered bluntly, that she did not see the need of quoting precedents, but that M'lle Montpensier had married M. de Lauzun; as for herself, she would not scruple to wed an artizan, if that artizan deserved her love.

Mme. de Rohan Soubise, entirely ignorant of her niece's secret, treated these sentimental maxims as idle reveries, brought into vogue by the romances of Rousseau. Mlle. de Soissons made no reply, and resolutely adhered to her opinion and project. Her love appeared to increase with each favour that fortune lavished on the marquis. It seemed as if she awaited the last and brightest boon of the fickle goddess, in order to crown the whole with the offer of her hand.

When once assured of the unquestionable worthiness of her choice, without regret or shame, and with all the confidence and sincerity of an ingenuous and noble mind, she wrote the letter in which, as the reader knows, she made him the offer of her hand. Happily for him, and M'lle de Soissons, Letorière knew how to appreciate the depth and holiness of such love. Sated with his too easy conquests, he resolved to devote himself, heart and soul, to the maiden who had so nobly placed her future happiness in his keeping. He had often stolen interviews with the princess, of which Martha was the only witness. M'lle de Soissons wished the marquis without delay, and as a proceeding of mere formality, to ask her hand of Mad. de Rohan Soubise. She, however, reserved to herself the right of following her own inclinations, in case of either acquiesence or refusal on the part of her aunt. As a man of honour and good sense, Letorière explained to M'lle de Soissons, that upon the issue of his suit, against the dukes of Brunswick-Oels, and the prince of Brandebourg-

Bareuth, depended his being acknowledged as of princely birth, and the recovery of a fortune suited to his rank. He thought it therefore advisable to await this consummation, before presenting himself to the Maréchale de Rohan Soubise.

The suit being gained, M. de Letorière's position would be so exalted a one, that no objection could be raised to his marriage with the princess Julie; if lost, his situation remained unchanged, and it would then be time to dispense with the approbation of her family, in the event of their opposing the match. But he was not disposed to cause an unnecessary rupture, which under any circumstances would be extremely unpleasant.

Such was Letorière's advice, which, however, was very unpalatable to Julie. Her determined spirit could not brook this temporising. The marquis proposed referring the question to the king, whose touching kindness towards him went on increasing, and M'lle de Soissons approved his choice of an umpire. Louis commended Letorière's delicacy, and promised to write to his ambassador at Vienna to facilitate the admission of his just claims.

In case the suit should be lost, this excellent prince was to speak with Mme. de Rohan Soubise, so as to remove the obstacles which the house of Savoy might oppose to the alliance.

A month had elapsed since Dominique's departure for Vienna in order to ascertain the sentiments of the members of the Aulic council, who would have to decide, in case of appeal, upon this important question, which had been in agitation for nearly a century.

It may be conceived with what impatience Letorière awaited his old tutor's return; for on the result of the marquis's cause almost depended his union with M'lle de Soissons.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE HOTEL DE SOUBISE.

At the period to which the reader's attention is now directed, M. de Letorière occupied a pleasant and retired dwelling, the garden of which opened upon the rampart, not far from the pavillion of Hanover, one of the appurtenances to M. le Marechal de Richelieu's magnificent hotel.

The marquis's abode was rather an ornamental cottage than a hotel. It was sumptuous and elegant within, but calculated for retirement or even mystery. In summer, it was completely hidden from the view by lofty trees which surrounded the garden; in winter, a high fence of ivy, very ingeniously trained to circular frames of lattice-work, so as to imitate trees, supplied the place of summer foliage.

Letorière, alone in his cabinet, was waiting for the return of Dominique, whom he hourly expected from Vienna. The princes with whom the marquis was at law, had great influence in Germany. It was said that the Aulic Council had been gained over to their interests; Letorière had thus to contend alone with these formidable opponents.

The old professor had been furnished with very urgent letters from M. de Choiseul to the French ambassador at Vienna. Louis therein made it known to his representative that he felt deeply interested in the success of M. de Letorière's cause, and ordered him to do all in his power to forward the private proceedings of the marquis's confidential friend.

At length the noise of a post-chaise was heard, and soon Jean François Dominique entered Letorière's study.

"Well, Dominique, is there any hope for us?" asked the marquis, embracing him cordially.

"I doubt it—monsieur le marquis."

"Is there no managing these Aulic counsellors, then?"

"Alas! I should fear so, did I not remember that Alcibiades at last reduced Tissaphernes! But I believe these Germans are more stubborn and more skittish than the satrap himself!"

"And who are these counsellors! What character have you heard of them?"

"Bad enough—bad enough! That's my grief.—These judges are three in number: the baron de Henferester, the maddest hunter and most terrible wine-bibber in all Germany; a very Nimrod, who issues from the forests to take his seat in council twice a week. Next comes the Doctor Aloysius Sphex, a learned commentator of Persius, I think—always bristling like a porcupine with Latin; and lastly the lord of Flaesinfingen, as gluttonous as an ostrich, and led by a wife who is the greatest tartar—I would say the most peevish protestant that ever carried a Bible hanging by a silver chain from her waist."

"Your portraits are touched with a master hand, Dominique, and they look rather frowning. And are these gentlemen of the council firmly wedded to the interests of the German princes, think you?"

"Man and wife are not more so! This is the first time that these three counsellors, (who cordially hate each other, doubtless, on account of their different tastes), have been of one mind; for on other occasions the favor of one is sure to bring on you the hostility of the other two."

"So the German princes—?"

"Have as much ground for hope as you for despair; for at Vienna, you pass for something worse than satan himself."

"Indeed?—you are jesting, Dominique."

"Would to Heaven it were a jesting matter! but it is too true. Your reputation as a man of pleasure, a libertine, a fop, a sybarite, and what not, has reached Vienna; in the eyes of these grave Germans, you pass for a will-o'-the-wisp, an imp, a sylph, in short, for something as brilliant, as subtile, indescribable and dangerous. Two centuries ago, they would have saluted you with a shower of exorcism and holy water; but in this philosophical and enlightened age, they would be satisfied to shut the door in your face, and cry, 'Vade retro!' taking you for Beelzebub in person. And worse than all, your cause is to be finally tried by these three judges in a fortnight hence! Oh! that Pluto had them for his guests!" added Dominique, in a tone of imprecation.

The marquis remained silent for a while, then wrote a line or two in haste, and having rung for a servant, handed a note to him.

"Take that," said he, "to the hotel de Rohan Soubise; ask for dame Martha, and wait for an answer." Then addressing the old tutor, "I will set out for Vienna this evening," said he.

"You wish to try your fortune, then, and fascinate your judges? Alcibiades, you know, ate black broth with the Spartans, made a centaur of himself in Thrace, and with a chaplet of violets on his head, sang the voluptuous strains of Ionia to the soft music of the lyre."

"I shall not pretend to charm my judges; but you know, my old friend, in affairs of this sort it is better to see with one's own eyes."

The conversation between Dominique and his former pupil lasted for some time longer, and turned upon the particulars of the suit at law.

At the expiration of half an hour, the servant returned with a note for Letorière, which having perused, he exclaimed with astonishment:

"How can she think of such a thing?—but since she insists, let it be so."

He then ordered his carriage, and went out, after having requested Dominique to superintend the preparations for their departure that evening.

[We will conduct the reader to the hotel de Soubise.] Four persons were chatting in a delightful little boudoir coloured with red lacquer of Coromandel. The chairs and tables of this charming apartment, which was one of the wonders of the hotel de Rohan Soubise, had brocade covers of a large crimson pattern on a silver ground. Curtains of the same material hung in graceful folds over the windows and glass-doors. A japan vase of purple and gold, three feet high, and filled with flowers, was placed before the casement so as to give to the whole the appearance of an enameled window-shade of the liveliest colors. Upon racks of massive silver, delicately wrought and incrusted with coral medallions, (the work of some skilful Florentine artist), might be seen groups of Chinese figures, the fantastic forms of which baffle all description. The mantel-piece was of the finest antique red, relieved by a frieze, consisting of a mosaic wreath of flowers and fruit; and near it was a bed in miniature, with curtains, canopy, valance, tufts of feathers, and everything complete. A lilliputian black and red spaniel with long silky ears, plaited with red and silver ribbon, was dozing upon it, half buried in eider-down. An antique china saucer of the color called king's blue, filled with grated macaroon paste and milk of almonds, was in readiness for the delicate Puff when he should awake.

The maréchale, princess de Rohan Soubise, M'lle de Soissons, the count de Lugeac, and the Abbé d'Arcurel, were the actors in the scene that follows.

M. de Lugeac, having just arrived, observed to the maréchale: "You know not what you have lost, Madame, in not being one of the *judicious* audience at the concert last evening; you would have witnessed the strangest thing in the world."

"What's that?" asked the abbé. "Have Jean Jacques and Arouet embraced each other in public? Did they sing a song in praise of the chancellor?"

"Come tell us what this great occurrence was," returned the maréchale.

"At the concert last night M. de Letorière was greeted with applause—and such applause as threatened to bring the roof about our ears," said M. de Lugeac, with a feeling of jealousy very apparent.

"Applause?—Why M. de Letorière is neither a prince royal nor an actor, as far as my knowledge of him goes: and I really do not see why he should have been applauded," said the maréchale dryly; for without any known motive, and certainly from mere prejudice, she cordially hated the marquis.

M'lle de Soissons blushed deeply, and by a gesture of impatience unperceived by her aunt, broke a thread of her embroidery.

"The plaudits were bestowed on M. de Letorière's—coat!" resumed the count.

"Which was fantastical enough, without doubt!" interposed the abbé. "This beau marquis must needs set the world talking about him."

"Not fantastic either; but so magnificent and becoming, that I, who do not pique myself on being a great admirer of the marquis, have candour enough to own that I never saw anything handsomer than himself, dressed as he then was. But when a man

devotes his whole time to the study of such frivolities, it would be strange if he did not make a lucky hit occasionally. Now for a description of this miracle of dress," said the maréchale; "I will then relate a curious anecdote respecting this M. de Letorière, which will form a singular contrast with his present ostentatious display."

"And I too shall have something to tell you," said the abbé; "for this very morning the archbishop of Paris furnished me with a hundred tales about this beau marquis!"

"Now then for an account of his dress, madam," said M. de Lugeac.—"When the first part of the concert was over, M. de Letorière was seen to enter the box of M. le baille de Solard, ambassador from H. M. the king of Sardinia;" and M. de Lugeac bowed to M'lle de Soissons, who was cousin to this king. "The box was empty; the marquis stood for a few moments, examining the hall. He had on a neat straw colored coat of watered silk, with cuffs of a changeable gold and green material, and a shoulder-knot of the same colours; you see, madam, that so far, nothing could be less gaudy."

"A tolerably good assortment of colours; nothing more!" interrupted the abbé.

"But" resumed the count, "the marvellous part of my story relates to the jewelry—the offset to this simple dress. In the first place his steinkerque ribbon was kept in place by a magnificent emerald clasp; then, every button on his coat and vest, his shoe-buckles, and even the mounting of his sword, were all of costly opal, from which darted green, blue and orange-tinted rays, as dazzling as those of the diamonds that mixed with these opals."

"Why such a set of jewels is worth more than 20,000 crowns!" ejaculated the abbé.

"I have no doubt of it," replied M. de Lugeac; "'tis therefore a piece of mad prodigality on his part. And yet, when the marquis made his appearance in the box, thus splendidly attired, with a thin, frost-like covering of unbleached powder on his hair, which, you know, it is his fashion to wear in wavy curls about his temples:—yet, I say, madam, a sort of ecstacy ran through the admiring audience; then followed a murmur of still increasing applause; and finally a cry of bravo! burst from the lips of almost every spectator."

"Nay, this is really no less than a heathenish ovation—this deifying a man for his beauty," said the maréchale, with a disdainful smile. "But what is quite as amusing as the enthusiasm of the Parisians for the graces of M. de Letorière, is the profound admiration he has of himself. The vanity of this modern Narcissus, they say, passes all bounds; forlorn and weeping maidens call in vain upon this haughty Celadon; without doubt, he deems no woman worthy of his homage."

"Or perhaps, madame, he deems one alone worthy of his love," said M'lle de Soissons, raising her sweet and noble face which beamed with gladness, love and pride, on hearing this indirect compliment to the marquis's fidelity.

The maréchale, not noticing her emotion, continued: "Nay, my dear princess, if it were so, we should know this phœnix—this paragon; for discretion is not the 'forte' of M. de Letorière. No, no, believe me—if his choice be made, (as you suggest)—it is so disreputable that he is obliged to conceal it from the world."

"Perhaps, on the contrary, the world you speak of, is not, in M. de Letorière's eyes, worthy to know his secret?" rejoined M'lle de Soissons.

This second repartee made an evident impression on the maréchale; for she exclaimed:

"It is clear, my dear Julie, you do not know M. de Letorière, or you would not defend him thus!"

"I was speaking in general terms, madame; but be assured that if I did undertake the defence of any particular person, I would do it boldly and candidly—when the proper time arrived for doing," said M'lle. de Soissons, with marked emphasis.

"Oh! I know you to be a heroine in that respect, my dear child; as a friend, you are truly so, and as an enemy, you are an enemy indeed. Allow me then in turn to have my feelings of preference and antipathy; and candidly—M. de Letorière has his full share of the latter; I hate anything connected with intrigue and obscurity. This marquis, five years ago, had no friend but his sword; how, I ask, can he have a set of jewels worth twenty thousand crowns, a sumptuous household, and play as deep as a 'fermier générale?'"

"I have found, madam, that persons who ask such questions as yours, can generally answer them," said Julie, dryly.

"Upon my honour, my dear, I should be very much perplexed to do so in this instance," said the maréchale, with a look of perfect candour; "but if I had the misfortune to be one of M. de Letorière's friends, I should desire nothing better for his reputation than to see him burned for a sorcerer, whatever doubts I may have respecting the philosopher's stone."

At this sarcasm, M'lle de Soissons, looked at the time-piece with an expression of uneasiness and impatience which she would fain have hidden.

"His expenditure is truly inconceivable," interposed M. de Lugeac. "'Tis true, some say he is fortunate at the gaming-table, others that the king and Madame Dubarry, who are well disposed towards him, have assist-

ed him in gaining two very important lawsuits; at all events, it is evident that His Majesty is bewitched like every body else; and it does seem as though every thing this marquis touches turns to gold. Would you believe it, Madame? a poor botch of a tailor, who made him a coat on credit when he was a mere runaway schoolboy, has now become the oracle of fashion!—the marquis does not try to conceal it, but speaks of it openly. This Landry of the 'Golden Shears,' whose stores are now so dazzling, and who is one of the richest artisans in Paris, owes his unlooked-for fortune to the influence of these magic words repeated throughout the city: 'He's tailor to the beau Letorière.'

"Really," said the maréchale, impatiently, "this sounds like one of the tales of Perrault."

"The description of his bedroom," replied M. de Lugeac, "seems still more like a fairy tale. They talk of a dressing case of chased gold, enriched with jewels—the workmanship of Gouttieré."

"I have heard the archbishop of Paris declare a thousand times," said the abbé, "that M. de Letorière was little less than the serpent of paradise. Should he ever again have business in the ecclesiastical court of Paris," said the good prelate to me this morning, "I'll have him muffled in a hood like a black penitent, to hide his face and change the tone of his voice: for in a question of precedence in which one of his relations was interested, this tempter overset all my arguments, and bewitched my canons, who thereupon could find nothing to talk about but him."

At that moment the glass-door of the boudoir was raised, and a valet de chambre announced in a loud voice: "Monsieur le marquis de Letorière!"

"M. de Letorière in my house! Why I have never admitted him—— what audacity!" exclaimed the maréchale, with no less anger than surprise.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DEPARTURE.

Upon hearing the marquis announced, madame de Rohan Soubise rose from her seat; and the count and abbé, together with the princess Julie, followed her example.

When the marquis entered, he found them standing. The maréchale in full dress, looked proud, angry and contemptuous; the abbé, at a loss for a suitable expression of countenance, had recourse to Puff, who disturbed by his caresses uttered a growl: the count leaning with his elbow on the mantle piece, played with his watch-guard; M'lle de Soissons, calm and resolute, rested one hand on her embroidery frame, and directed to Letorière a look at once tender and thankful.

The marquis had scarcely saluted M'me. de Rohan Soubise which he did with every mark of respect, when the latter turned towards M. de Lugeac, and pointing to M. de Letorière with a gesture of supreme contempt inquired: "who is that gentleman?'

The count too much embarrassed to return a ready answer, hesitated; at which the marquis remarked dryly: "M. de Letorière will dispense with the count de Lugeac's introducing him to her ladyship."

"'Tis at my request alone, madame, that M. de Letorière has consented to come hither," said the princess Julie, in a firm and decided tone.

"At your request?—yours, Julie?" exclaimed M'me de Rohan Soubise with surprise. "Impossible!"

"I may be unfortunately a stranger here," replied Letorière;" "but I trust your ladyship will distinctly understand, that without the express orders of M'lle de Soissons, I should not have presented myself at the hotel de Soubise—an honour to which I have hitherto had the merit, or modesty never to aspire," said the marquis, very ironically.

"Princess Julie—will you explain yourself?—this scene has lasted too long already!" cried the maréchale in a commanding tone. The count and abbé seemed disposed to retire, but M'lle de Soissons said to them:

"You will oblige me, gentlemen, by remaining in order to be witnesses of what I have to say to M'me la maréchale."

The two gentlemen bowed respectfully; M'lle de Soissons then addressed her aunt as follows: "I have requested M. de Letorière to come hither, madam, because I desired to tell him before you, and you before him, what are my unalterable intentions; I am an orphan, and mistress of my actions, as long as they are worthy of my birth; but you are my relative, madam,—I know what I owe you—and I cannot shew my respect for you better than by making you acquainted with a determination on which my destiny depends."

With the exception of the marquis, the actors in this uncommon scene were lost in amazement. Madame de Rohan-Soubise, thunderstruck at the resolute tone assumed by the princess Julie, could scarcely believe what she heard.

M'lle de Soissons continued: "I have offered my hand to M. de Letorière; he has accepted it"——

"You have offered your hand!!" ejaculated the maréchale: "princess Julie—you have either lost your reason, or this is all a jest as ill-timed as it is unworthy of you."

Letorière cast a look of reproach upon Julie, at seeing her thus violate the promise she had made, to defer taking any decided step until the termination of his lawsuit.

The princess turned towards him: "You shall now hear," she said, "whyI have acted thus;" and addressing her aunt she added with solemnity: "I have not lost my reason, and I speak seriously. Before Heaven that hears me; before you, Madam, before you, count de Lugeac, and before you, abbé d' Arcueil, I, Julie-Victorie de Soissons, swear to lord no other man than M. le Marquis de Letorière here present;" and she extended to him her hand with a grandeur and simplicity of gesture truly sublime.

The marquis took the proffered hand and kissed it with deep yet respectful tenderness.

The scene was so totally unexpected, so overpowering, that the maréchale remained, for a few moments, gazing silently and inquiringly at the countenances of her almost petrified friends, the count and abbé. "And I," replied the marquis, "here swear to devote my existence to the noble and generous princess who deigns to honour me with her choice.

"And I, by all the authority that relationship gives me, and the law allows," cried Madame de Rohan Soubise, arousing from her stupor, "declare to you, M'lle de Soissons, that this shameful alliance is impracticable, and shall not take place!"

"The honour which M'lle de Soissons confers upon me renders it unnecessary, Madam, that I should reply to the insulting language you have just addressed to me," said the Marquis, deeply moved at this scene.

The princess Julie resumed, addressing her aunt: "With the delicacy which ought to characterise the man to whom I confided my destiny, M. de Letorière wished to ascertain the result of the suit which is to be brought before the Aulic Council of the Empire, before he should formally accept the hand I had freely offered him; for if he gain his suit he will be recognised as of a princely house, and there will be no longer any disparity of rank between us, (to use a hackneyed phrase;) but if this proposition on his part was noble and delicate, it was base on mine to accept it. It was seeming to yield to prejudices which I have never admitted, to make my decision depend on the result of the suit. I would not subject my conduct to such an interpretation; I therefore resolved honestly and openly to make known to you my resolution, whatever may be the issue of the suit. M. de Letorière sets out this evening for Vienna;—this evening, I shall repair to the Abbey de Montmartre, there to await his return; for you can easily conceive, Madame, that it is impossible for me to remain any longer under this roof.

"However disagreeable to you, Mademoiselle, the hotel de Soubise may be, and doubtless is, you can only leave it for the purpose of consummating a marriage worthy of your house, unless you would wish to return for life to a convent."

"Unless, Madame, His Majesty should think proper to sanction my going immediately to reside with the Abbess de Montmartre," said M'lle de Soissons, handing to Madame de Rohan Soubise a letter which she took from her pocket.

"The King's own hand!" exclaimed the Maréchale.

"I wrote yesterday to His Majesty, who was acquainted with my designs; read his answer, Madame, addressed to yourself:"

"For reasons known to ourselves, My fair Cousin, we desire that M'lle de Soissons should retire to the Abbey de Montmartre until farther orders.

Yours affectionately, LOUIS."

Madame de Rohan Soubise, in utter astonishment read the letter again and again.

"Tis wondrous well!" said she at length, striving to repress her vexation;" you have carried the day, Mademoiselle—but His Majesty may recall—will doubtless recall a measure into which he has been surprised—And I will immediately go seek an interview with him."

"I believe, Madame, I know enough of His Majesty's intentions, to feel assured of the uselessness of such a proceeding," said M'lle de Soissons. Then giving her hand to Letorière: "Adieu, my friend," said she; "go to Vienna—you will find me at the Abbey de Montmartre.

The same evening, M. de Letorière was on his way to Vienna.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LORD OF HENFERESTER.

THE spacious manor-house of Henferester was situated at the distance of ten leagues north of Vienna. It was of ancient date: its blackened and ivy-mantled walls, and roof overgrown with moss, gave it a deserted appearance. The body of the edifice, together with a large tower that flanked it on the east, had almost fallen to decay. The only inhabited part of the mansion was the western tower; and in a few scattered borders of box still visible on the esplanade in front of the chateau, which was surrounded with linden-trees, might be distinguished the traces of a former parterre, the place of which was now usurped by briars and parasitic plants.

Autumn was drawing to a close, and a

mellower tint of purple was beginning to overspread the broad hue of woods which skirted the horizon.

The sky was dim and rainy, the air damp and cold: as night approached, the high and narrow window of the ground-floor of the tower was suddenly lighted up; its colored panes, although somewhat blackened with smoke, shone brightly, and the arms of the Lords of Henferester were displayed in vivid contrast with the increasing darkness.

The lower hall of the tower was a vast circular apartment, and served the Lord of Henferester both for kitchen and dining room. The upper stories contained several dilapidated chambers, which were reached by means of rude and narrow winding steps of stone. A cord, which passed through rusty iron staples in the damp wall, helped to ascend this unhandy staircase.

A huge fire blazed on the spacious kitchen hearth; a *copper three-branched* lamp, hanging from the smoky joists of the ceiling, enlivened the room; on the rough-cast walls, and supported upon stag-horns, might be seen guns and hunting knives, tusks and other trophies of the wild-boar, together with several wolf-heads stuffed with straw.

The ground, beaten like the threshing floor of a barn, was strewed with chopped straw, answering for a carpet. In one corner was an enormous barrel of beer, broached and mounted upon two posts. Above this two other casks of different dimensions: one containing Rhenish wine, and the smaller filled with kirsch-wasser from the Black Forest. On each side of these casks were arranged pewter drinking cups of various sizes.

A little farther off two large barrels were placed against the wall, one filled with salt bacon, the other with sauer-kraut. A fork and iron spoon which surmounted the two barrels, served (to speak armorially) as pendants to the pewter cups.

Lastly, a meal-tub containing a dozen loaves as large as millstones, completed the culinary apparatus of the room. Nothing save a quarter of venison roasting before the huge chimney fire, and a bubbling pot of sauer-kraut and bacon here gave evidence of a kitchen. There were none of those cleverly-constructed furnaces or moulds, or stew-pans for various uses, so dear to the epicure.

The stock of utensils consisted of the gridiron that hung at the wide mouth of the oven under the mantel-piece, and a strong roasting-spit turned by a dog.

A quarter of deer, fellow to the one that was roasting, hung bleeding from an iron hook near the door of entrance.

Thanks to the mixed exhalations from venison, bacon, sauer-kraut, beer, wine and kerch-wasser, the atmosphere of this room was so thick, or rather, nourishing, that a delicate stomach might, upon a pinch, have been amply satisfied therewith.

A mixed shower of rain and hail was falling without, and pattered against the window panes.

The old white-haired Germans, in grey loose coats with belts of raw hide, were busily preparing supper for the Lord of Henferester, who had been out hunting since morning, and had not yet returned.

The preparations were simple. The servants drew up to the fire a long and heavy oak table; at the upper end of it they placed the Lord's chair, of the same material, and having his armorial bearings rudely carved upon the back, which terminated in a kind of cornice. No cushion lessened the hardness of this seat.

In front of the chair, the servants laid a plate or rather dish of silver, two pounds of bread at least, and three tankards which were also of silver and armorially chased, and served their lord both for glasses and decanters. The first, used for beer, held two pints: the second, for wine, a pint; and the third, filled with kirsch-wasser, contained a half-pint.

These tankards were usually replenished in the course of the meal; of cloths, napkins or covers there were none; these being regarded as ridiculous superfluities. The hunters of that day had always two knives in their belt; one of which was straight and long, and intended for piercing the beast; the other, broad, curved, and a little larger than a common table knife, was used for hacking the carcase; and with this too they cut their meat at table.

The valets next arranged pewter plates and bits of bread on each side of the table. These inferior places were reserved for the lord's serving men according to their importance.

The seigneur of Henferester, faithful to the old patriarchal traditions of his country, ate with his domestics. On his right sat Erhard Truches, his whipper-in; on his left, his major domo, Selbitz!

The latter, having set the sauer-kraut boiling and the venison roasting, assisted Link, the old groom, in preparing the table.

As for women, one only was ever seen in the chateau; old Wilhelmine, the minister's housekeeper, came every Saturday to make and bake bread for the week, whilst the lord was in council at Vienna. On Wednesday, the other day of council, dame Wilhelmine attended to the linen, always in the seigneur's absence, for he had a rooted antipathy for the fair sex.

"The master is late this evening," said the major domo, casting a rueful look at the venison which was beginning to dry.

"'Tis a dark night and the rain falls fast, Selbitz. Perhaps the chase has led him to

the forest of Harterassen. Master Erhard Truches sent word by Karl, the hound-keeper, this morning, that 'twas a wild boar the seigneur had to hunt. Now, these boars that start from the woods of Fersenfak, always make for the marshes, then for the forest of Harterassen, and at last get caught in the Priory pond. All that makes eight leagues to go, and the same to come back, master Selbitz ——."

"And considering the darkness, and the rain, and the bad roads, through the forest, 'tis a long —— But, hark-ye, Link," said the major domo, listening, "is not that his lordship's horn?"

"No, master Selbitz, 'tis the wind singing through the weather-vane ——."

"What's the time of day, think you?" asked the major domo; (for the use of clocks was as unknown or unacknowledged at the chateau as at Otaheite.)

"It must be between six and seven, master Selbitz; for Elphin, his lordship's roan horse, has been whinnying for his oats, a quarter of an hour or so. There—dont't you hear him? Patience, patience! old Elphin," said the groom, turning towards the door; when your comrades, Kolk and Lipper, come home, you shall have your provender, bnt not till then, old glutton!

"To a certainty, that's his lordship's horn I hear," cried the major-domo. "Heaven be praised!—What weather!—Come, Link—run and take hold of my lord's stirrup, while I go and throw a basket of wood-apples on the fire to make it blaze."

"'Tis his horn, to be sure," said Link, after having listened attentively; "but his tantara and recall are not so lively as usual.—Ah! Master Selbitz, he's had bad sport today."

"For that very reason don't make him wait. Quick, bestir youself!"

The groom sallied forth in haste, and Selbitz, after brightening up the fire, laid upon his master's silver trencher a red-sealed letter that had been brought by an express from Vienna during the day.

At that moment the loud cracking of a whip was heard, together with a stentorian voice exclaiming angrily:—"A murrain light on them, the sneaking curs!—Erhard, see if the piebald takes his feed kindly; for he has had a hard day's run of it!"

Then came the noise of heavy boots, iron heeled and spurred; the door opened, and the lord of Henferester entered, accompanied by a dozen hounds bespattered with mud, and dripping with rain, who rushed to their accustomed places at the hearth, to dry themselves.

Their master allowed them this privilege from the love he bore towards the canine race as the chief abettors of his favourite pursuit, knowing well that dogs that are sent to kennel wet and cold often fall sick.

The lord or rather chatelain of Henferester, who was between forty-five and fifty years of age, was a colossus in size, and seemed possessed of a gigantic strength. As he entered he flung his fur hat upon the meal-tub. His fiery brown hair was cut short; his red beard, which was only shaved on council days, was so thick and spreading as almost to cover his face. His features, strongly marked and tanned by exposure to the air, were harsh, but not without a certain nobleness of expression.

His old green tight-bodied coat was soaked with rain, and buttoned to the chin. His buckskin breeches looked black with age, his heavy boots splashed with mud reached high above his knees, and a leathern belt secured a pair of hunting knives with horn handles. A large brass horn hung from his baldric, whilst his huge shaggy hand grasped a whip and carbine.

Having given his horn and weapon to his major-domo, who hung them upon the wall, the chatelain approached the fire with a dissatisfied air, distributed several rude kicks amongst his dogs in order to make room for himself, and taking his seat thus angrily addressed the pack: "Back! ungainly, good-for-nothing mongrels; 'twould serve you right to make you turn that roasting-spit, instead of letting you join with noble animals in the chase. To give up after a five hours' run! and all because our bear betook himself to the furze which you found a little too thorny for you—eh? You've become very delicate, it seems—even you, old Ralph!" he added, aiming a furious kick at the animal thus called upon for his defence.

The major-domo perceiving his master's angry mood, attempted to soothe it by reminding him of his many former successes. "I am not surprised that monseigneur should feel vexed at a bad day's sport, for he is so seldom unfortunate; but——"

"Enough of that," said the chatelain in a surly tone. "Take that venison from the fire, and let me have supper, for I'm famishing; that bear led us as far as the forest of Henterfussen. 'Twas there the dogs gave in before a thicket; to be sure, 'twas close, and thorny enough to rip any hide but a boar's to make way through it."

"Your lordship sees, then, that it was not altogether the fault of these good dogs.—But your lordship is wet through; won't you please change your clothes?"

"Change!—And why should I change, dainty master Selbitz?" cried the chatelain fiercely; "do you take me for a jack-a-dandy—a Frenchman? No, I never shift my clothes when I return from hunting? Do my hounds shift their coats—or my horses?"

"Certainly not, my lord, but your clothes reek upon your back like dame Wilhel-

mine's wash-tub."

"That's a proof they are drying."

"But—my lord?"

"But hold your tongue, master Selbitz the fool, master Selbitz the prattler, and give me a taste of kirsch."

Then noticing the letter on his plate he asked:

"What's that, Selbitz?"

"A letter, brought by one of the couriers of M. le conte de Hasfeld."

"Away with all this business! Is it not enough to have to go to Vienna twice a week?" said the chatelain, unsealing the letter, which ran as follows:

"I beg to inform you, my dear baron, that the French marquis, M. de Letorière, intends visiting you to-day for the purpose of sounding you on on the subject of his law suit; I need not remind you of the almost formal promise which you made to add your vote to those of your colleagues so as to ensure the triumph of the duke of Brandebourg.

"Accept, my dear baron, &c."

"What the plague is the Frenchman coming for?" cried the chatelain in a fury. "By the holy kings of Cologne, I can't rest a moment! Here's this fop from Versailles coming to rouse me like a boar from his covert. As far as I can see, his suit is lost,—absolutely lost; what more would he have? Does he think it likely he can interest me in his favour? A shameless jackanapes who, they tell me, works at an embroidery frame, paints his face, and wears patches?—But, egad! there's no escaping this marquis. If he comes I am obliged to show him hospitality; 'tis fifteen leagues from here to Vienna; I cannot let him go back without seeing him. Deuse take the law and all that go to law!—And if he arrive this evening?—I shall have to offer him a bed; and where?—all is in ruins here—And the dainty chick will come in a litter, too, like a sick woman!"

The baron stamped with rage, called his major-domo, and said:—

"Here's a Frenchman coming here to-night—a marquis—a plaintiff. In such weather as this, one cannot let him return to Vienna. Where shall we put him and his retinue? for this minion has doubtless as many bandboxes and so forth as a woman.—"

"Faith, your honour," said the major domo scratching his ear, "there's no place but the rat-chamber that will keep out the rain."

"Well, then, let him have the rat-chamber." Then the baron added with bitter irony: "And to give an exalted idea of the hospitality of the chateau of Henferester, and above all that this delicate visitor may be quite at his ease, don't forget, major-domo, to hang up the handsome silk curtains, to get out the bed of eider-down, and the fine linen sheets; and beat up the Turkey carpet well; put the scented wax tapers in the silver-plated candelabras; and warm his bed with coals of aloe-wood.—Do you hear, major domo?"

"Yes, yes, my lord," answered Selbitz, as he busied himself with removing from the fire the quarter of venison, the bacon and the sauer-kraut, and chuckled at his master's pleasantry; "yes, my lord, don't fear; I hear you; the straw-bed shall be fresh and well thumped. the blanket well beaten, the floor well swept, the cobweb-curtains and hangings well shaken, and the shutters opened, so that the moon may shine sweetly into your guest's chamber, and lastly, since he is so delicate, his bed shall be warmed—for I'll put the turnspit into it."

The chatelain could not help laughing at the facetiousness of his major-domo, who gave only a very fair description of the rat-chamber. It was, however, by no means worse than that which the baron himself occupied, so indifferent was he to the commonest comforts of life.

"To the table"—cried the chatelain impatiently, drawing up his chair, and taking his knife from his girdle. At the same instant, the sound of the trumpet, such as is carried by the German postillions, was heard.

"Can that be the confounded Marquis?—Hallo—Erhard!—Selbitz—run and admit him," cried the baron, rising reluctantly from his seat, and advancing towards the door. "He must be bewitched to think of travelling in such weather as this—But bah!—in his post-chaise, he's snugger than he'll be in the chateau. Now let 's see this beautiful minion—this prince of dandies at the court of France."

And the baron stepped out, much against his will, to perform an act of hospitality to his guest.

CHAPTER X.

THE SUPPER.

Contrary to the chatelain's expectation, Letorière alighted from a horse instead of a chaise, and put his bridle into the hands of the postillion.

The master of Henferester understood too well the duties of his station to withhold a welcome from a gentleman who came to solicit him. Moreover he found Letorière much less effeminate and foppish than he had anticipated. It evinced no small share of hardihood to ride fifteen leagues on a post horse, at night and in such stormy weather.

When the marquis entered, the "substantial" atmosphere of which we have

already spoken nearly suffocated him; there was now an additional smell of the dog-kennel, caused by the presence of the pack, which at sight of the stranger, commenced barking in marvellous unison. The marquis halted, seemed to listen to this hubbub with marked satisfaction, and exclaimed in very good German, "on my life, baron, I never heard finer tongued dogs than yours! By St. Hubert! it makes a true hunter's heart beat. Then, without any attention to the chatelain, he began to examine and point out with an air of serious interest the qualities of the dogs as they came up to him, and resumed in a tone of increasing admiration: "Prime dogs! good dogs! Ours from Normandy and Pictou, cannot match them. Yours have finer ears, better legs. Zounds! if these are not the finest leaders I ever set my eyes on!—Come here, beauty"—And Letorière took hold of the fore paws of a large white dog with a spot like a black mantle on his back, looked at him with the air of a connoisseur for a few minutes, and said approvingly to the gaping chatelain: "This is one of the best in the pack, baron—your blood-hound, is he not? He has seen some service! So much the better! age makes a good blood-hound."

Stupified at the assurance and volubility of the marquis, the chatelain, who was too frank a sportsman and too fond of his dogs to take offence at the exclusive attention they excited, and above all struck by Letorière's observation respecting the blood-hound, answered almost mechanically: "But who told you that that dog, Mouk, was my blood-hound?"

"Who told me, baron? Why in the first place the print of the boot which I see on his neck and chafed coat, as plainly as the marks of the traces on a draught-horse's chest; and then his deep mellow voice, which proves that he never yelps—Is not this more than enough to point out a blood-hound to one who is no novice in the fraternity of jolly huntsmen. And then what a well marked nose! and ribs as prominent as my fingers! Believe me, baron, you'll never see a keener blood-hound as long as you're a sportsman! Take care of them—But hold! I see a haunch of venison getting cold there; let's not leave it to spoil any longer, for I'm as hungry as a wolf! You shall see what a trencher-man I am—Your hand, baron! By St. Hubert, our common patron, you are a fine old German gentleman! I was told so, and now I can answer for it."

"May I inquire, sir, to whom I have the honor of speaking?" asked the baron more and more astonished at the cavalier deportment of his guest.

"That's a fact, baron. I am the marquis de Letorière; I have come to talk with you about my lawsuit. But as you will need a good light to see through this confusion of darkness, greater than that of Hades itself, we will defer speaking on that subject till to-morrow morning—And now to the table, since I have invited myself without ceremony; excuse the roughness of my manners, for I am a child of the forest."

The chatelain could not recover from his stupor; he had expected to see a mincing, affected, scented, effeminate fop, as ignorant of sporting matters as a shopkeeper of Leipsick, whereas he met a frank, bold and frolicsome young fellow, who proved himself a knowing huntsman, and whose negligent dress might well compare with his own.

These particulars inspired him with almost friendly sentiments towards Letorière, and the admiration shewn by the latter for his hounds, greatly increased his good will; so that he answered him cordially: "The manor-house of Henferester is at your disposal, monsieur le marquis; I only regret that I cannot entertain you better."

"You are too particular, baron. If you knew me better, you would see that I could not be received in a manner more agreeable to my taste. To table then, baron!" and the marquis drew near the fire.

Letorière had undergone a complete metamorphosis, morally and physically. The gentleman who had been applauded at the theatre for the superlative elegance of his attire, and the graces of his person, now wore an old blue hunting frock with velvet collar that once was red, with boots as heavy, muddy, and formidably spurred, as those of the German Nimrod. His impowdered hair, ruffled by the exertion of riding, was tied behind his head with a leather thong; his beard neglected, and his delicate hands soiled by perspiration, looked almost as much tanned as the chatelain's. In short the marquis was completely changed, even to the enchanting tone of his voice, which was now abrupt and a little husky. None of these things escaped the baron's notice. "Do you know, Erhard," said he aside to his whipper-in, "do you know that this Frenchman singled out in an instant, our old Mouk as a bloodhound, and one of our best dogs?"

"Indeed, my lord?" said Erhard, doubtingly.

"Indeed! Erhard; I began to think they know something about the chase in France."

Then addressing his major-domo, whilst the marquis dried himself at the fire, the baron continued:

"Remove these plates, Selbitz; the French are not accustomed to our German habits."

Selbitz was preparing to obey the order, to his great vexation as well as that of Erhard, when Letorière, fearful of making himself enemies in the chaletain's house-

hold by a delicacy which they misconstrued, exclaimed: "Nay, nay, baron, would you have me call for my horse and return to Kenna without supping? Why, the pest, do you make these good fellows take away their plates? Am I more of a nobleman than yourself that I should be shocked at your domestic habits?"

"It is indeed our old German custom," said the chatelain, "but I thought that in France——"

"Baron, we are here in Germany, at the house of one of the worthiest representatives of the old nobility of the empire. The regulations of his family ought not to be infringed on; so now, my worthy huntsman," addressing Erhard, "and you my brave supervisor of tuns, pipes and barrels, take your places with the consent of the baron, who, I hope, will not deny me this favour."

Upon a signal from the chatelain, the two servants gladly replaced their plates at the lower end of the table. The baron then beckoned the marquis to his seat, each made ready for an attack on the venison, and the immense dish of sourkrout and lard which smoked upon the board.

The baron was about to plunge his knife into the meat before he carved it, when Letorière exclaimed with a grave and solemn air, as he laid his hand on the chatelain's arm—

"One moment! baron—Whip me, if I dine without a blessing, and a grace."

The master frowned, and answered with an air of impatience and embarrassment:

"Since the death of my chaplain,, I have almost forgotten the text, but I say it internally.—Here! Erhard, can't you give us the blessing?"

"No, my lord," said Erhard, sulkily; "I say it but once for the whole year, and 'twas yesterday I laid in my stock of blessings."

"Well, then, you Selbitz!"

"We, my lord?—my brother, the minister at Blumenthal, asks it for me every day.——"

"Why, baron, are you all Turks then? if so, I must ask a blessing," and the marquis rose and said in a loud voice:

"Holy Saint Hubert! Grant, we pray thee, that the venison may be fat, the wine good, our appetite keen, and our thirst unquenchable." He then emptied at a draught the tankard that held a pint of Rhenish wine, wiped his mustaches with the back of his hand, and with an Amen! replaced his cup upon the table. The chatelain laughed heartily at this pleasantry; and imitating the prowess of his guest, swallowed at once his pint of wine, repeated the Amen! with the voice of a stentor, and pronounced his client a really jovial soul.

The two servants, although as much tickled as their master as this unusual grace before meat, thought fit to moderate the outbreakings of their mirth.

"Selbitz," said the chatelain, enlivened by the repast and the sallies of Letorière, go and replenish these tankards; and don't forget your own and Erhard's; for this shall be a festival in honour of my guest; and he rudely seized the marquis's waist, and pressed it as much by way of shewing his cordiality as his strength of hand. Letorière whose slight form concealed, as we have said, athletic force, returned the pressure as rudely. The chatelain, who was astonished at this show of vigor, said with a smile:

"A steel spring is often as strong as a bar of iron, my guest."

"But unfortunately, baron, a large cup holds more than a smaller one," replied the marquis.

The wine and beer went round; the baron saw with a sort of national pride, that Letorière, after eating five or six slices of venison, boldly attacked the sour krout and smoked bacon; and that he praised it for the relish it imparted for the wine, of which he despatched two or three times his small and large tankards full.

However ravenous the appetite which Letorière displayed, it by no means checked his flow of conversation. His quick conception enabled him to place himself on a level with his host, whom he captivated by his thousand sallies; in a word, Selbitz and Erhard were surprised at seeing their usually grave and taciturn lord laugh that evening more than he had done for years.

The whipper-in saw in Letorière a finished sportsman; listening with deference to his slightest remarks, his admiration was at its height, when the baron ordered him to take the dogs to kennel, and give them their suppers. A second pot, intended for the pack, was taken off the fire.

The major domo cleared the table as to eatables, and placed upon it the two tankards of kersch-wasser, a large jar filled with tobacco, and presented to the baron a venerable pipe, which the later filled; at the same time asking Letorière, with whom he now felt quite at his ease: "Is tobacco smoke offensive to you, marquis?" His enquiry was promply answered by the marquis' drawing from his pocket an enormous pipe that had indirectly seen long and promiscuous service, and filling it with all the ease of long experience.

"You smoke too, then, marquis?"—exclaimed the delighted chatelain.

"What is life without it, baron?—After a day's sport and a hearty meal, what can compare with the pleasure of a pipe, with your feet upon the andirons, and now and then a sip of kirsch-wassen—that wild offspring of the Black Forest,—which is, to my taste, as far above the brandy of France, as a moor-fowl is better than a common barn-

door rooster." After this audaeious flattery, the marquis hid himself in a cloud of smoke.

The chatelain, exeited by his frequent libations, and perhaps not possessing so ealm and eool a brain as the marquis, looked at his guest with admiring wonder; he was at loss to conceive how a body, so frail in appearance, could be so vigorous; in short, how a Frenchman could smoke and drink even more than himself, and drain the "virgin tankard" that had baffled the most formidable topers of the Empire.

"To the health of your mistress, my guest!" said he gayly to the marquis.

"My mistress—is my earbine!" said Letorière, stretehing himself out before the fire, and poking it with the toe of his boot, the sole of whieh was a full inch thick.

"Away with your women, who sicken at the smell of smoke, brandy, or a dog-kennel, unless they have a smelling bottle at their nose! Do you think mueh of women, baron?"

"Not I—I'd rather hear the jingle of spurs than the rustling of silk; but at my age 'tis right to do so," said the baron, still more surprised to find that the marquis shared his antipathy for the fair sex as well as his fondness for rural sports.

"'Tie wise at any age, baron; I'd swap even-handed all the lovesick guitars, and all the languishing lutes of the troubadours, for one old forester's horn."

"I'll tell you something, my guest," said the baron, striking his tankard lightly against Letorière's.

"Do so, baron," replied the marquis, as he refilled his pipe.

"Well! before I had seen you, and knowing that you were coming to solieit me respecting your suit whieh unfortunately—"

"Plague upon the suit!" eried Letorière; "the first that speaks of it this evening shall be eondemned to drink a pint of water!"

"Agreed, marquis—Well, before I had seen you, I fancied I would as soon have leaped into the deepest bramble-hole, as to receive you at my board; to be eandid with you, I dreaded your arrival. I thought you a fop, a jackanapes."

"Thank you! baron. Well, then, I thought you an Aleindor, a Cytherean shepherd."

"Now, although I knew nothing of you till this evening," eontinued the baron, I will say, and that eandidly, that when you have taken leave of the poor manor of Henferester, I shall have lost the best eompanion in the world for enlivening a long winter's evening at the chimney eorner."

"And for a rough day's chase in the deep forest. Whip me the pitiful coxeomb who prefers the dangling flirtations of the ballroom to the bottle, the pipe and the ehase! If you are inelined to prove to me that your hounds are as good as they are handsome, baron. you'll see that I am worthy of them."

"There's my hand for it, my guest! tomorrow at break of day, we start for the ehase."

"So be it, baron;—we'll talk about the lawsuit the day after, and not till then—a pint of water still for him who mentions it!"

"Bravo, my guest! but it begins to be late. If you are tired, old Selbitz shall light you to your ehamber, or rather barn furnished with a sorry bed—but it's all I can offer you—mine is still worse."

"Nay now! no ceremony, baron; if that puts you to any ineonvenience, I'll take one of my boots for a bolster, you can let me have a bundle of straw, and I'll take a charming night's rest before these coals, which will burn till morning.

"I have passed many a night so in a coal-burner's hut," said the chatelain with a sigh of regret, when I've been hunting in the Black Forest: but at all events, my guest, bad as your bed is, it will be better than the threshing floor of this room."

"Adieu, then, till morning, mine host; I shall sound the 'reviellee' myself," said the marquis, "but in the mean time I'll give you the 'good night.'" And taking the chatelain's horn from the wall, he blew so perfeet a "tantara," and gave it so much of the strength and elearness of tone peculiar to the sons of the ehase, that the enraptured baron exclaimed:

"For thirty years I have not heard such a blast as that."

"That is simply because you cannot so well hear yourself, baron; your horn is too nicely in tune, to admit of a doubt as to your being an adept in that noble craft. So good night! and be sure not to dream of water, sour wine, or empty bottles."

"Good night, marquis!"

The baron ealled Selbitz, ordered him to shew his guest into the rat ehamber, which was sueh as we have deseribed it, with the exeeption of a good fire that now blazed within it.

Letorière, fatigued with the unusual exertions of the day, soon fell into a sound sleep, and the ehatelain followed his example, after having repeated several times to Selbitz and Erhard, who were receiving his orders for the morning, that it was a pity the young marquis was a Frenchman, as he really deserved and ought to have been a native of Germany.

CHAPTER XI.

THE CONFIDANT.

The baron was no sooner awake on the following morning, than Selbitz came to inform him that the marquis had already started for the woods with Erhard Truches, and had requested the major-domo to make his apologies to the chatelain for so doing.

"Who could have expected from the marquis's representation here, to find him so staunch a hunter and drinker, Selbitz! For do you know he was a full match for me at table last night, and that we drained our tankards merrily and to the dregs?" said the chatelain.

"Yes, my lord, and he made his way to the rat chamber with as steady a step as if he had drunk only buttermilk at supper."

"Come, come," said the baron, as he received from his major domo's hands all the necessary equipments for the chase; "come, Selbitz, you must confess the marquis is a good and worthy gentleman; and so gay too, that he gladdens the very heart! What merry tales he told us! I wish he would stay a few days longer at the chateau; for on my soul he is an agreeable companion. Although there is a difference of more than twenty years in our ages, it seems as if we had been intimate for a long, long time; in fact, were it not that he is but a one day's acquaintance, I should say—and yet I cannot tell why, Selbitz,—I should say, that I feel a friendship for him; long life to the frank and free, say I; there's nothing like it!"

Having hastily despatched a slice of cold veal on, a bowl of beer-sops, and a quart of Rhenish wine, the baron mounted his horse, and was soon at the place of meeting agreed upon with Erhard Truches, which was a cross way in the forest.

He there found his whipper-in, the dog-keeper and his pack.

Erhard Truches looked sad and absorbed in his own reflections; the baron, surprised at not meeting Letorière at the place of rendezvous, inquired of Erhard where he was. After a short silence the latter replied with a look of fear and uneasiness: "Is my lord quite sure that he knows his guest?"

"What do you mean, Erhard?" cried the baron. "Where is the marquis? Did he not start with you this morning to beat the covert?"

"Yes, my lord; that's why I ask you whether you are sure of him.—The fact is, my lord, that jest of mine about the grace before supper will bring me bad luck!"

"Nay, then, will you explain yourself?"

"I'll tell you all, my lord;" and Erhard added in a low voice, and trembling as he spoke, "I am sadly afraid that he whom you call your guest is the being who appears sometimes by moonlight, in solitary cross ways of the forest, and offers to desperate hunters three bullets—one of gold, another of silver, and a third of lead—but all as the price of their souls!"

"So, now, you take my guest to be the demon-hunter!" cried the baron, contemptuously shrugging his shoulders. "Come, come! your morning cup has muddled your pate, old Erhard!"

The whipper-in shook his head. "Explain to me, then, my lord, how it happens that your guest, as you call him, how one that never entered this forest before, should know it as well as I do!"

"How would you have me explain that?" said the astonished baron.

"I set out with him at day-break."

"Master Erhard," said he, "if you lend me a blood-hound we'll divide our beat in the forest. I'll scour the inclosures of the Priory, the Hermit's Chapel, the Blasted Pine, and the Black Mere"—

"He told you that?" interrupted the baron, with amazement.

"Just as I tell it to you, my lord, and he added: "I fully expect to start a 'ten-horn,' for the covert round the Hermit's Chapel is noted for the stag. Do you, for your part, Master Erhard, try to turn up a boar. In the thickets of Henrich's, which are so full of brambles, there are always some to be found. By this means the baron will have his choice of stag or boar."

"But, Monsieur le Marquis," said I, quite thunderstruck at all this, "you know our forest well, it seems—have you often hunted here?"

"Never," said he, "but I know it as well as you. Come! good luck to you, Master Erhard;" he added, and at that he drove into the woods, taking with him poor Mouk, our best blood-hound, who will perhaps be changed into a lynx, or a beast with seven legs, by some diabolical witchcraft of his."

The baron was by no means superstitious, but he was completely puzzled by the narration of his whipper-in, whom he knew to be too grave and respectful to jest or trifle with him. Nevertheless he could not admit that the marquis possessed the topographical knowledge ascribed to him by Erhard.

"And what have you roused, Erhard?"

"Your supposed guest has spoiled my luck—I have found nothing, my lord."

"What, nothing! Why this is the first time for years that you have scoured the woods to no purpose! And to-day, too, that we are to hunt in company with a stranger!"

"The evil spirit can go where men *can not*, my lord," remarked Erhard, gravely.

"He that you call your guest has only to blow his horn, and all the beasts in the forest will come to him just as the bird falls into the mouth of the serpent."

"Go to the d——l, you old dotard!" cried the chatelain, impatiently.

"I shall not have far to go for that, my lord," growled Erhard, in a low voice, and pointing to Letorière, who just then darted from a thicket, with old Mouk in leash.

"Vivat, baron!" cried he, "if you have a mind you may run a ten-horn, and follow my clue from the chapel haunt. From the size of his tracks, I'd bet that he is one of those large stags with white forehead and legs; the French king has some like him in his domain of Chambord; I should know their foot amongst a thousand. They are noble-bodied fellows!"

"You are in the luck of it, marquis," said the baron, "but you are a conjurer."

"Indeed I am no such thing, baron; but your blood-hound is not far from it. 'Tis to him I owe my stag. You yourself, brave Erhard," he added, turning to the whipper-in, "would have done as I have, with Mouk at the end of your leash. But come! baron, to horse, to horse! 'Tis a full league from here to the spot I have marked, and November days are short. Here! take your hound, Erhard," and with these words he handed a louis to the old hunter.

The latter, however, as soon as he found the eyes of the marquis turned from him, threw down the piece of money as if it had been red hot, and buried it with the heel of his boot under some dry leaves.

"No devil's coin for me," said he to himself; "if I had put you in my pocket, in less than a quarter of an hour I should have found a red bat or a black toad in it instead of a gold piece."

The whipper-in then took hold of the leash, with as much precaution as if the marquis had had the leprosy, and cast an uneasy look at his favourite dog, which he considered as bewitched forever afterwards.

Having drawn his thick boots over a pair of buckskin gaiters, the marquis mounted old Elphin, and the baron remarked with fresh pleasure that his guest was an expert horseman.

"Baron," cried Letorière, upon reaching an inclosure in the forest, "here is my clue—uncouple the hounds, and I'll go into the thicket with three or four of the best of them for the attack."

"One moment," said the baron, seriously, "you pass for a sorcerer in the eyes of Erhard Truches; he'll hunt awkwardly if he takes you for the demon, for he'll think more of his soul than of the stag."

"How!—Explain yourself, baron."

"Come hither, Erhard," said the chatelain.

The hunter stepped forward, with a restless and timid air.

"Did you not tell me," continued the chatelain, "that you could not conceive how my guest, who has never been in this forest before, should know it so well! How he should know that the Chapel Close is the best haunt for stags, and that relays would be wanted at the White Cross and on the skirt of the Priory Plain!"

"It's the truth," said Erhard, mysteriously. "No man could know whether"—

"And hang me if I can see into it either," interrupted the baron.

Shrugging his shoulders, with a smile, the marquis drew from his pocket a small leather case, and walking up to Erhard, "Here! old boar," said he, "here is my conjuring-book."

The hunter started back, with a look of horror.

Letorière drew from its case and spread open upon his saddle-bow a forest chart, published expressly as an imperial hunter's guide, and on which the inclosures, roads, by-paths, haunts, and tracks of game were minutely delineated.

"The imperial hunting-chart!" exclaimed the baron. I ought to have thought as much—here's the mystery cleared up. But a man must be clear-sighted indeed, and well experienced in the chase, to make such use of it. Ah! marquis, marquis, there is not your match in Europe. To start a stag the first time one beats a forest is the greatest feat I have seen! Do you understand now, old blockhead?" he said to the hunter; "you ought to go down on your knees to the marquis, who is the leader of us all!"

"Yes, yes, my lord, I understand; and heaven be praised that I do! for a sad mishap might have followed." At these words Erhard took his screw-wire and unloaded his carbine.

"What are you doing there, Erhard?" asked the baron.

The huntsman showed him a black ball, on which a cross had been scratched, and said to him:

"At the first enclosure we came to I should at all events have lodged this charmed bullet in the body of M. le marquis, supposing him to be the demon—old Ralph says there's nothing like it for setting a spell."

"Villain!" cried the baron.

"He is right," interposed Letorière with perfect composure; "but you forget, Erhard, that in order to make the charm complete, you ought to have had three pieces of gold in your left pocket, to keep the devil out of your purse," and the marquis threw three louis to Erhard, who, this time, did not think proper to bury the money under the leaves.

The roused stag was soon afoot.

It is needless to describe the various incidents of this day's hunt, in the course of

which Letorière displayed consummate sportsmanship; the animal was taken, and the marquis, the first in at the death, plunged his knife into the stag, which furiously resisted the hounds.

The party reached the chateau at night fall. Selbitz had, as on the previous day, prepared the bacon, sauer-kraut, and venison, and filled to the brim the large, the middle-sized, and the small tankards.

As before, the baron and marquis did honour to the repast; as before, they charged their pipes after supper, and drew up to the fireside, whilst the major-domo was occupied with his household functions.

Although the baron felt himself won over by the jovial spirit and resolute frankness of the marquis, he was a little chagrined at finding in so young a man, a successful rival both in the chase and at the board.

Letorière, too sagacious not to read the baron's feelings, was even then preparing a signal triumph for him.

The chatelain, who really felt an interest for his guest, attempted again to introduce the subject of the lawsuit.

"Confound the lawsuit!" exclaimed the marquis. "That's my motto.—If I lose my cause I shall have gained a jolly companion. Your hand, baron!—I only wish I had twenty suits to lose on such terms! But my tankard is dry.—Hallo, Selbitz! hallo—old vulcan!—The kirsch-wasser evaporated before my thirst like the mountain dew before the sun."

"Poor lad! he is trying to drown care," thought the chatelain; "I ought not to let him drink alone;" and the baron replenished his cup.

"Baron, a song!" said Letorière, much excited. "Do you know the 'Retreat!' They say, the air and words were both composed by one of your old huntsmen."

"Do you sing it, marquis, and I'll tell you whether I know it."

Letorière, after having again drained the tankard, gave a loud hem! by way of prelude, and commenced the following:

"Hark to the joyous note,
That tells the stag's at bay!
Foresters, hallali!
A ten-horn dies this day."

"Come, baron.—Chorus!—could anything be more apropos after our day's sport?"

"With all my heart and soul, marquis. I did not know this chaunt; but, by Heaven! 'tis worthy of Mozart?" and the baron took his part in the chorus with a voice that made the windows tremble.

"Listen to the minor, baron. 'Tis as sweet and melancholy as the dying notes of a distant trumpet on a fine night." Letorière resumed, in a less sonorous tone:

Bright Hesper's lamp is hung,
And daylight shuns the west,
The hallali has rung,
All nature sinks to rest!

Bestir ye merry men,
In haste collect the pack,
To horse! my whippers-in,
Sound ye! and be not slack;
For the moon's pale light
Will soon invite
The demon hunter's shot!
To the manor, then,
My merry men,
'Twere best we met him not!

Towards the conclusion of his song Letorière's voice faltered, and he gave to it an almost melancholy expression; his features lost their look of thoughtless gayety, and he supported his now clouded brow upon his hand.

Selbitz, who was standing at that moment behind his master's chair, said to him, in a low voice, as he pointed to the marquis:

"When the flower is too wet it droops upon the stem; so it is with drinking: to-day is not always the child of yesterday. Come, come! my lord, you will be king of the feast to-night. See! the Frenchman is leaning his head upon his left hand; 'twas always thus that the *wind-up* of the forester general of Hasbruk commenced; but he, it must be confessed, broke down the first day."

The baron smiled, with an air of proud satisfaction, and answered in a corresponding tone of voice:

"'Tis no wonder, Selbitz! he is so young;—but for all that he's a sturdy combatant. Yesterday I found my match; but two days in succession have been too much for him. Except myself I know of no one to equal him."

"Use him up, then, my lord—use him up, for the honour of old Germany," said the traitorous major-domo.

"Well, marquis!" said the chatelain, aloud, "is your song finished already?—Shall we not drink to your glorious day's chase?

"Drink," said the marquis, raising his tankard, with seeming difficulty, to his lips. After which he repeated, in a low and doleful tone the finishing lines of his song

For the moon's pale light
Will soon invite
The demon-hunter's shot!
To the manor, then,
My merry men,
'Twere best we met him not!

"There's sorrow in his wine," said the baron to his major-domo.

"He reminds me of count Ralph, who, you know, my lord, would always break into a funeral dirge over his tenth bottle," replied Selbitz, softly.

"Come, marquis, let's drink to the first

boar we kill!" said the chatelain, with a view to give the finishing-stroke to Letorière's seemingly prostrate reason.

"Drink," said the marquis, who began to show signs of intoxication, by assuming a tone that was by starts slow and brisk, sad and merry. "The chase, baron, is good—wine, too:—it makes one giddy,—angry,—no time to think,—and then one looks gay,—but at heart one is—But, bah!—stay, baron,—I must make a confidant of you."

"Oh, oh! now for his secrets," said the major domo, "that's just like the minister of Blumenthall; but the reverend hardly ever began with them till he had his eighth tankard filled. Do you recollect, my lord, the tale he told us about the buxom miller's wife of Primrose Valley?"

"Hold your tongue, and listen," said the chatelain, who added aloud: "Come, speak out, marquis—let's drink; here's to your courtesy in making me your confidant."

"Well, then! baron, would you believe it,—this law suit turns my head—"

'Indeed, marquis!" said he aloud. Then aside to Selbitz: "I was sure of it; the poor youth wanted to drown sorrow."

"It's as true as that my cup is empty—I would not tell you so, baron, but you are my friend—I ought to confide all to you—know, then, that I have paid a visit to my judges."

"Ah, bah!" said the baron, pleased at his guest's communicative humour, and anxious to ferret out the secret of his proceedings,—"have you, indeed?"

"Yes, baron; the name of the first is—Spectre—"

"Sphex, you mean to say, marquis!"

"Sphex or Spectre, 'tis all one. But, zounds! baron, let me laugh—although he is one of your faternity; but that is not my fault, I think as much of a graduate in us-a-um as a broken tumbler or a foundered horse."

"You are right, marquis, you no more like the smell of old books than I do."

"Well! the old Spectre, (I like better to call him Spectre, because that describes his face as well as name), had the insolence to ask me, after two minutes' conversation, whether I spake Latin."

"You, marquis, you speak Latin!" said the baron, fully appreciating Letorière's indignation. "Where in the world had he left his spectacles? Do you look like a man that speaks Latin? Was there ever such an impudent old scoundrel! What the plague could he have taken you for?"

"You are aware, baron, that it was impossible to take such an insult coolly, even from one's own judge—Ah, indeed," said I, "do I look as if I fed on old books? or like an ink-sucker? a pedant? Talk Latin, indeed! If I had not come here to ask you for your support in my law-suit, I'd shew you how I treat them that say I talk latin!"

"A famous hit, that, my guest! I would have given a hundred florins to have witnessed the scene," said the baron, laughing heartily

"The doctor then told me plump and plainly tha he had nothing to say about my suit, but that I might consider it as lost, because my character was known—the miserable old spectre! my character was known!! This was too much for me; he had already asked if I spoke Latin. I could no longer contain myself, and frankly proposed crossing swords with him."

"A sword fight with Sphex!" replied the chatelain, now convulsed with laughter, "I'd have given the world to see how the old baboon looked at this; what did he say?"

"Nothing at all; but raised his hands to heaven, and disappeared as if by magic behind a pile of big books. I then withdrew, pretty well assured that the doctor would bear me malice; and yet I don't know why, for surely one may exchange a thrust or two, and still be good friends afterwards."

"What uncommon simplicity!' said the chatelain aside, "he must have a strangely mistaken idea of his own manners and behaviour."

Letoirère resumed. "I had next to visit counsellor Flacsmfingen; I did so, and when I asked to see him, they put me cheek by jowl, with an old witch in black, who might well have passed for the old bookworm's mate, she looked so thin and marrowless. She held a bible in her hand, into the bargain. "My business is with the counsellor and not with his wife," said I to the lackey. "I and the counsellor are one," replied the witch. "Tell me, sir, what you have to say to my husband."

Whereupon, baron, as I am seldom at a loss for finesse, I hit upon a plan for sending the wife to the right about, and bringing forward the husband."

"Let's hear it, marquis," said the chatelain, and then added to himself, "If there is any thing like finesse or cunning about it, I'll drink cold water; he's rough and knotty as the oak, but open-grained as the willow. Well, this plan of yours, marquis?"

"Zounds, madame," said I, "What I have to say, is hardly fit for female ears; 'tis a case to be argued in court with closed doors."

"Tell it me, sir, nevertheless."

"Accordingly, baron, I began telling her a mess-room anecdote that would have made a hussar blush."

At this new farce the baron was taken with another fit of mirth, and he exclaimed: "A mess-room tale! and before the pious prude of Flacsmfingen! Whip me, if I would'nt give my bloodhound Mouk to have been present at this scene. What did she say?"

"She became as red as a craw-fish, call-

ed me an audacious fellow, and motioned me to the door."

"If that is how you proceed with a view to interest your judges in your behalf, my guest, I congratulate you."

"And what the mischief should I have found to say to a pedant and an old prude? I could not unmake myself!"

"To be sure not," again soliloquised the baron; the poor lad is like me, he would be bothered, indeed, to accustom himself to the jargon of a doctor, and the prate of an old woman."

"I had then only one visit more to make, which was to you. I have done so; you are a fine fellow; but I am afraid I annoy you with my private affairs; yet this suit, if you knew---if I should lose it---I try to look careless about it, but indeed if it were —if I should lose it!" cried Letorière with energy, "'twould be the death of me; I would pray to St. Cartouche to have pity on my soul."

After this apparently unwise disclosure of his secrets, Letorière seemed to be collecting his scattered ideas; he pressed his hand to his forehead, and gazed around him with a bewildered air.

"Nay, nay, where in the world am I?—Is that you, baron? Come, come, your Rhemish wine gets into the head, my host; I've been asleep, I think." And the marquis closed his heavy-looking eyes as if in spite of himself.

"You have not slept yet, my guest, but I think you seem well inclined now—and your cup is full."

"Then empty it for me, baron—for—the law-suit—the stag—to-day—Ah!—confusion on the suit!—hurrah for the chase! Drink—your turn, baron!" And Letorière pretended to fall asleep with his head on his arm.

"He refuses to drink—victory!" cried the chatelain; and he immediately called Selbitz and Erhard as much for the purpose of having witnesses of his triumph over the Frenchman, as of ordering them to help him to reach the ante-chamber. Letorière, whose head was quite as cool as the baron's, accepted the proffered assistance, ascended as it were mechanically the staircase that led to his dormitory, and fell heavily on his bed.

The baron felt sorely perplexed. If he did sympathise deeply with Letorière, especially since the latter had given him reason to think that he could not survive the loss of his suit, the good chatelain had also made a formal promise of his vote to the German princes, whose claims he considered to be better founded. In order to reconcile his desire of obliging the marquis, with his already plighted word, the baron had recourse to a singular compromise: "From what I know of the characters of Sphex and Flacsinfingen, setting aside their favourable dispositions towards the princes," said he to himself, "they will will doubtless both vote against this poor Letorière, the more so, since his apostrophe to the pedant and the counsellor's wife. Moreover, their hostility ensures the triumph of the party opposed to the marquis. Now, provided that party gain, what matters it whether they do so by a unanimous vote, or by a majority of two to one? All that I wish is, to be able without violence to my convictions, to send home the poor marquis with kind words, and a proof of my friendship; for I shall never have the heart to say No! to so good and jovial a companion."

Having adopted this resolution, the chatelain impatiently awaited his guest's waking-time, and then informed him that having passed the night in reflecting upon his suit, his conviction had become somewhat modified, and that he gave him his word to vote for him.

After having heartily thanked the baron, Letorière set out again for Vienna. Notwithstanding his assertions to the chatelain, he had as yet seen neither the counsellor Sphex, nor the wife of counsellor Flacsinfingen.

CHAPTER XII.

DOCTOR SPHEX.

Doctor Aloysius Sphex occupied a retired dwelling, situated at the farther end of one of the suburbs of Vienna. Its windows were secured by iron-bars, whilst thick plates of the same metal, and a strong lock increased the strength and security of the low and narrow door. The courage of the visitor was taxed by having to pass between two enormous mountain-dogs, chained behind the door, in order to reach a small inner court-yard which led to the kitchen, in which cold and naked apartment sat the doctor's housekeeper, leaning over a couple of smouldering logs.

The doctor himself occupied a large library on the first floor, dusty, littered and encumbered with folio volumes, which seemed not to have been opened for a long time. A lofty window, with small panes set in lead, and shaded by a piece of old tapestry, admitted into this retreat a dim and doubtful light. A vast chimney, flanked by twisted stone columns, and traversed by a sculptured mantel-shelf, had been transformed into a book-case; as the doctor never allowed himself a fire, for fear of destroying his books.

In order to protect himself from the pinching cold of autumn, the counsellor contrived

to esconce himself in an old sedan-chair, which he had had placed in the midst of his study; by shutting the glasses of this, he found himself pretty comfortably seated both for reading and writing.

Doctor Sphex was a short, meagre, delicate old man; and his shaggy brows, piercing eyes, sarcastic smile, protruding underjaw, and wrinkled cheeks, gave him a remarkably sardonic and malignant cast of countenance.

His old clock, which was ornamented with curious inlaid work, had no sooner struck the hour of two, when the counsellor started from his sedan chair with the precision of an automaton.

He had on an old black coat, almost threadbare, over which he drew a sort of grey wrapper, put on a broad brimmed hat over his red wig, for the better security of which he made use of a checkered handkerchief, folded cornerwise, and tied under his chin.

Having placed his spectacles in one pocket, and in the other a precious Elzevir, a little volume bound in black shagreen, doctor Sphex took his cane and prepared for a walk.

But as if a sudden thought had struck him, he abruptly returned, crossed the library, and entered another room, carefully shutting the door after him. Then, approaching the wainscot, he touched a spring, moved a sliding door, and the opening thus left in the wall disclosed to view a small iron chest.

The old man's eyes sparkled with pleasure; he took a key which hung from his watch chain, opened the chest, and took from it, with an air of pious reverence, a flat and oblong cedar case. It contained a manuscript on vellum in 4to. The style of writing was that used in the tenth century: the titles and capital letters were gilded and ornamented with vignettes.

Having contemplated this manuscript with the eager, restless, and untiring look which the miser casts upon his treasure, Doctor Sphex restored the case to its place, shut the chest, and adjusted, on the inside of the secret door, a spring which was attached to the lock of a loaded pistol. This invisible weapon was destined to punish the audacity of him who should presume to lay an imprudent and sacrilegious hand on this precious monument of calligraphy.

Being thus reassured of the existence and preservation of his dearest treasure, the counsellor stepped out to take his usual walk.

On passing the kitchen he observed, in a surly tone, to his housekeeper:

"If the French marquis returns to the charge, whether I may be at home or not, tell him I am absent."

He came again, this morning, sir."

"Very well, very well; what need have I to see this coxcomb—this fop, who 'non pudet ad morem discincti vivere Nattæ.*'"

The old man proceeded towards a little valley situated at the back of the city, and called the Linden Hollow.

As there are certain fastidious and exclusive amateurs who admit the excellence of but one school of painting, and one master of that school, so Doctor Sphex had a passion for the satires of Persius, and placed this work at the head of all the Latin poèms of antiquity.

He not only possessed all the editions of this work, from the rarest 'princeps of Brescia' (1470) down to the most modern, that of Homs (1770); but he had purchased at a very high price the manuscript in question, which he regarded as an inestimable treasure.

The counsellor had translated, commentated, and was still daily commentating upon his favourite Persius; he had so entered into the spirit of this author that at length their thoughts became perfectly assimilated, and he continually applied to himself and others quotations borrowed from this stoic and satirist. His admiration bordered upon monomania. In like manner as on a blade of grass or in a drop of water the microscope reveals to the eye of the observer unknown worlds, so the doctor's exalted imagination found in the simplest words of the poet the profoundest ideas.

He was advancing slowly towards the limit of his daily walk, which was a fallen tree that served him for a seat, when he heard some one speaking in a loud voice. Vexed at finding his place taken, the doctor hahed behind a holly-bush.

But what were his sensations, when he heard a clear and melodious voice reciting, with the most expressive and prosodaical accentuation, these verses from the first satire of Persius:

"O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!"†

The counsellor held his breath, listened, and when the voice had ceased, he stepped briskly forward to see the stranger, who appeared to have so true a relish for his favourite author.

He saw a young man very negligently dressed; some rolls of paper were protruding from his old black coat pocket: and he held upon his knees a voluminous quarto. The whole exterior of Letorière (for it was no other than this modern Proteus), gave the exact idea of a poor poet: the narrow and coarse linen cravat, the hat rusty with age, the pale and half starved countenance; in short, every thing was there to complete this second metamorphosis.

* Who is not ashamed to live after the manner of the dissolute Natta.

† Oh! the cares of human nature! Oh what vanity is in the affairs of life!

At sight of the old counsellor, the marquis rose respectfully.

"Young man; is not our Persius the prince of poets?" exclaimed Sphex, striking with open hand the Elzevir which he had just taken from his pocket, and approaching Letorière with an animated countenance.

"Sir," said the marquis, assuming a look of surprise, "I am not aware——"

"I was behind the holly yonder; I heard you recite the commencement of the first satire of our poet, our deity! For, by Hercules! young man, I see that you appreciate him as I do. No Tuscan ever pronounced with more purity than yourself the inimitable poetry of our common hero; and I frankly confess that my old heart is gladdened at this happy and unlooked for meeting. "Hunc, Macrine, diem numera meliore lapillo,"* cried the old man, and cordially extended his hand to his new acquaintance, after making this quotation from his treasured poet.

"If it were not too presumptuous, Sir," replied Letorière with humanity, I would fain reply:

"Non equidem hoc dubites, amborum fœdere certo consentire dies, et ab uno sidere duci."†

"Bravo! my young friend; no reply could possibly have been more sensible or appropriate. You must be as well acquainted with my Persius, my inimitable stoic, as myself: but that which you possess, and I alas! do not, is that fine harmonious pronunciation which really enchants me! I would therefore," added the counsellor, hesitatingly,—"if I might presume so far—I would ask you, in the name of the object of our mutual admiration, to repeat to me the first verse of the third satire."

"With pleasure, Sir," said Letorière, smiling.

"Hæc cedo, ut admoveam templis et farre litabo."‡

"Better and better," exclaimed the doctor, clapping his hands. But in reference to this quotation, what meaning do you assign to *far*?" And the scholar cast an almost anxious glance at the young man, whose knowledge he designed to test by this enquiry.

"In my humble opinion," answered the marquis readily, "*far* signifies any farinaceous grain, or of which flour is made, and in opposition to the opinions of Casaubon and Scaliger, I think the term applies not to bread, but to wheat, barley—any kind of grain, in short: for you know, Sir, the *far* was, together with salt, the commonest of offerings; it is this which Virgil designates by the words: *fruges salsæ—salsa mola*—it is then by way of humble homage to our common divinity, Sir, that I will recite the verses that please you."

Letorière then generously repeated the whole satire, giving to his melodious voice an expression which was alternately so arch, so caustic, and then again so energetic, that the enraptured Sphex exclaimed:

"Why, he lets nothing escape him! not a shade of meaning! not a single intention of the poet! He does not stop at the surface of the words! he scrutinizes, penetrates, looks through them: searches under the bright envelope, and makes apparent the deep and hidden sense.—Young man—young man—," added Sphex, rising, "I do you homage! for to read thus is to translate! And to translate thus, you must be so deeply imbued with the spirit of the original, as almost to substitute the author's individuality for your own! Moreover, I declare that a man so fortunate, so richly endowed as to be identified with Persius, deserves in my opinion, as much respect as Persius himself: I regard this phenomenon of assimilation as a kind of intellectual affinity! Give me your hand then, young man.—Were it not for the disparity of age between us, I should say, that we were brothers in intelligence, the offspring of one father!"

Doctor Sphex spoke with such vehemence and enthusiasm, that Letorière looked at him with profound astonishment, fearful of having been mistaken in the person, and of being in the presence of a monomaniac, instead of the aulic counsellor he had looked for.

The scholar, misinterpreting his silence, said to the marquis: "See, now, I am acting like an old dotard—I am treating you as a brother, without even thinking to ask you what learned Latinist I have the honour of addressing."

"My name is Letorière, Sir," said the marquis with a bow.

"Letorière!" ejaculated Sphex, drawing himself up to his full height; are you by chance related to the marquis of that name?'

"I am the Marquis de Letorière, Sir."

"You?—you?—you?" said the doctor, in three different tones, rising chromatically. "Come, now, that is impossible. The marquis de Letorière is, as the world says, as silly as a carp, as volatile as a butterfly; one of those retailers of stale and senseless jests, incapable of comprehending a word of Latin, and who, if he heard the name of Persius, would think it had reference to Persian silk," added the counsellor, not a little proud of this poor play upon words.

"I am sorry to find that I have been so scandalously misrepresented to you, Sir," said the marquis.

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* Make a record of this day, Macrinus, with a pebble of good omen.

† Indeed, you cannot doubt, that there is a certain mutual agreement in our nativities, and that we are guided by one constellation.

‡ Let me bring this offering to the temples, and propitiate the gods with meal.

"But now in truth and earnestness, can you be M. de Letorière?"

"I beg leave to assure you of it, sir."

"And are you here on account of a law-suit? Answer, sir; answer, and do not deceive me."

"Sir!" said the marquis, as if shocked at the indelicacy of the counsellor—

"Excuse my abruptness, sir—if I appear so well informed of what concerns you, it is because ——" and the doctor paused; "it is because I have some relations in the Aulic council, and I am acquainted with all that takes place there.'

"Well! it is true, sir; I am unfortunately here on account of a suit at law," said Letorière, with a sigh.

"But, my young friend, allow me to tell you that you appear very indifferent about your affairs.—You come here to recite verses to the zephyrs;—admirable verses, it is true: but, between ourselves, that is not the way to gain your suit. Believe me, young man, if Justice is blind, she is not deaf,—and there are a thousand means of propitiating your judges."

"Alas, sir! I have seen the judges; and it is because I have seen them that I cherish so little hope. In my vexation, I have recourse to literature for edification and comfort; I resort especially to my favourite poet. I was seeking for strength to struggle with my unhappy lot, by reading his verses. Do not you think, sir, that his noble, sonorous, and energetic strains are calculated to raise the drooping soul, even as the martial tones of the clarion reanimate the dispirited soldiery?"

The scholar was deeply moved by the simple and yet dignified tone which Letorière imparted to his words.

"Pardon," said he, "the perhaps uncalled-for interest which an old man feels in what concerns you; but do you not exaggerate the unfavourable sentiments of your judges! Have you indeed exerted youself to the utmost to win them to your cause, before you become thus desponding?"

"The judges I have seen, sir, could scarcely feel any sympathy for me, and I ought not to have reckoned upon it."

"Why so, my young friend?"

"Our poet furnishes an answer, sir:

"Velle suum cuique est, nec voto vivitur uno.
* * * * * *
Hic satur irriquo mavult turgescere somno.
Hic campo indulget.— "*

"I understand, I understand," said the counsellor, smiling at the just and pointed application of these verses; "I know it is said throughout Vienna, that counsellor Flacsinfingen might well have figured at the gluttonous feast of Trimalcyon, and that the brutal chatelain of Henferester might have contended with savage beasts in the Circus at Rome! In short, what should you, a poor scholar, poet, nightingale —what should you have in common with that fat-paunched Flacsinfingen, who thinks of nothing but his table! What could you have found to say to him, if not this:

Quæ tibi summa boni est? Uncta vixisse patella.
Semper?"*

"And so too with this gladiator, this brutal Henferester, whose frame of giant bulk I never see without thinking of these verses of our divine poet:

Hic aliquis de gente hircosa centurionum
Dicat: Quod satis est sapio mihi; non ego curo
Esse quod Arcesilas ærumnosique Solonis."†

"Well! Sir, you will confess," replied the marquis, smiling, "that having no other than such words as you have quoted, to address to my judges, I could scarcely hope to influence them in my behalf. Alas! I am neither a forest-hunter, nor an epicure: otherwise I might perhaps have awakened some sympathy."

"But all the counsellors are not gladiators or wife-ridden gluttons, my young friend—

At me nocturnis juvat impallescere chartis.‡"

"Ah! sir,—my misfortune is not to have found amongst my judges men who resemble you."

"And yet I have heard a certain doctor Sphex spoken of," said the counsellor, with a penetrating look at the marquis, "as a good-natured old man, and not altogether unlearned,—who presides at court in the morning, and devotes the evening to his favourite studies—

His mane edictum, post prandia Callirhoe do!"‖

"I have called several times at the house of counsellor Sphex, sir, but have not been admitted," said Letorière; "and if what you tell me is true, I regret it doubly; for he is perhaps the only one of my judges in whom I could excite any sentiments of be-

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* Every one has his peculiar taste, minds are various,
One likes to fatten in luxurious sleep; another delights in athletic exercises.

* 'What do you consider the sovereign good of life?'—
'To have always a well filled dish.'—

† But I hear some old goat of a centurion answer; "I am as wise as I want to be! I do not care to become an Arcesilas or a crabbed Solon."

‡ But it is my delight to grow pale with nightly study.

‡ I pass sentence in the morning and devote the evening to the Muses.

nevolence, or whose favour I might claim on the score of our congeniality of tastes."

"By Hercules! young man, do not doubt it; your case is not desperate,—I know this oddity, this Sphex: if you will accompany me, I will do myself the pleasure of recommending and even introducing you to him."

"How shall I ever be able to acknowledge or deserve so inestimable a service."

"Young man, such persons as you and counsellor Sphex are rare; and each party must gain by the interview I am about to procure you. Give me your arm and let us walk on."

The old man took a sly pleasure in the surprise which he was preparing for Letorière: the latter continued to dilate upon the capricious freaks of Fortune, until they reached the house of the counsellor, who then threw off his incognito.

To old Catherine's great surprise, the Doctor ordered her to lay the table for two: for the marquis could not decline partaking of the repast which the frugal counsellor thus described:

> . . . . . Positum est algente catino
> Durum olus, et populi cribro decussa farina;*

and which fully realised the description he thus gave of it. A hermit would scarcely have been satisfied with the fare that was served up in the library by old Catherine.

The counsellor, more and more enchanted with his guest, read to him his translations and commentaries; and lastly, as a favour on no account to be expected from him, and as the highest possible mark of confidence, he shewed him the precious manuscript!

"Do you and your housekeeper occupy this house alone?" asked the marquis, suddenly and with a gloomy look; at the same time he grasped the manuscript as tightly as if he intended to retain possession of it.

"Can it be that his enthusiasm for Persius would lead him to steal my MS. and assassinate me?" the counsellor asked himself, with secret dread, mixed, however, with admiration; and approaching the spring door which concealed the pistol, he prepared for a desperate resistance. But the marquis, replacing the manuscript in its owner's hands, exclaimed with an almost frantic look:—"For the love of Heaven! sir, hide it! hide it! Pardon me, madman that I am!" Whereupon, he rushed precipitately from the room with his hands over his eyes.

"What ails you, young man?" asked the scholar, feelingly.

"Alas! sir, pardon me!—At sight of that M. S. an infamous, a monstrous thought occurred to me,—in spite of the sacred claim of hospitality."

"You felt, then, a desire to deprive me of my treasure?"

Letorière bowed down his head, with a look of confusion.

"Give me your hand, my young friend. I understand—I understand you but too well," said the counsellor, sighing as he did so. "It is a signal honour that you have done to our author, and if you knew the history of that manuscript"—And after a short pause, he added: "You would see that I ought to excuse the terrible temptation which you have been able to resist."

Unfortunately the counsellor's communicativeness ended here.

The two friends passed the rest of the day in analysing most eruditely the decisions of Casaubon, Koenig, and Ruperti, upon their favourite poet. They discovered beauties in him which had lain hidden from all editors.

Letorière, by a lucky hit of memory, raised the admiration of Sphex to ecstacy, in pointing out to him that the passage in the third satire: "The lessons of this portico of the sage on which is described the defeat of the Mede," referred to Zeno, the chief of the stoics.

In a word, during this long and learned confab, Letorière, by means of the deep study which he had recently devoted to Persius, at the suggestion of Dominique, and aided by a remarkably retentive memory and flexibility of mind, completely captivated Doctor Sphex.

However, not a word had been spoken by either in reference to the suit at law. The marquis was deterred from doing so by motives of prudence, the counsellor by embarrassment; for however well disposed he felt towards Letorière, he bitterly reflected that his vote alone would not ensure the success of his young protégé.

"What a pity it is," cried the counsellor, "that you leave Kenna so soon! We might otherwise spend long and delightful days in the ever-increasing admiration of our divinity, and might say with him:

> Unum opus et requiem pariter disponimus ambo,
> Atque verecunda laxamus seria mensa."*

"I feel the privation as deeply as yourself, M. le conseiller; but unfortunately our pleasures must be sacrificed to our duties;" and Letorière rose.

Struck by the marquis's reserve with regard to his suit, the counsellor said, looking penetratingly at his guest:

"But this lawsuit, we have forgotten it"—

"How could one think of pitiful secular interests, sir, whilst speaking of the object of his adoration with a fellow-worshipper."

* A cold plate of raw vegetables is served up, together with bread of unsifted flour.

* We would set to work together, and lay it aside together; and a modest repast should enliven our serious mornings.

"Hem! hem!" muttered the doctor, shaking his head; then smiling sarcastically, he recited the following lines:

"Mens bona, fama, fides, hæc clare, et ut audiat hospes;
Illa sibi introrsum, et sub lingua immurmurat: Oh! si
Ecuilet patrui præclarum funus!"*

"Yes—yes—" he says aloud: "Forget the lawsuit,—and in his heart he consigns to the infernal regions the crabbed counsellor who gives him not a word of hope,—is not that your case now?"

"I cannot help it, sir," said Letorière, with a smile, and a ready quotation from the same book:

'Messe tenus propria vive!"†

"And you think you have gathered but an indifferent crop, eh?" cried the scholar, laughing at his guest's ready wit. "Well! I'll undeceive you. It shall not be said that the voice of old Sphex did not protest, at any rate, against the decision of a porpoise like Flacsinfingen, or of an old goat of a centurian, a brutal gladiator like Henferester. In my opinion, the equilibrium between you and the German princes was so perfect that it wanted but a breath to weigh down the balance."

"Scis etenim justum gemina suspendere lance
Ancipitis libræ."‡

quoted the marquis: "Not doubting the judge's integrity, I never doubted the success of my cause, as far as he is concerned."

Enchanted at this fresh citation, the counsellor exclaimed:

"And you have done well, young man; if my voice be unsupported, it will protest in a more striking manner against a decision which I shall regard as unjust if unfavourable to you. Farewell, then. The day after to-morrow we pronounce upon your cause—may the gods be propitious to you! As for myself, by Castor! I know what I have to do:"—and the actor ended the conference with this final citation:

"Ast vocat officium: trabe rupta, Bruttia saxa
Prendit amicus inops; remque amnem surdaque vota
Condidit Ionio!"‖

* His wisdom, honour and virtue are talked of aloud by the visitor; but at the same time he offers up this mental prayer for the sick: Oh! that a handsome hearse would come and take father-in-law!

† We must try to live on the cross we make

‡ For you know how to hold with impartial hand the scales of justice.

‖ But duty calls you. Your poor friend is wrecked upon the rocks of Lucania; his prayers were unheard, and his wealth is at the bottom of the Ionian sea.

CHAPTER XIII.

COUNSELLOR FLACSINFINGEN.

On the day after Letorière's interview with doctor Sphex, an extraordinary sensation prevailed in the household of the aulic counsellor Flacsinfingen.

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, that Madame Martha Flacsinfingen, a tall lady, of forty years of age, or thereabouts, thin, pale, and solemn visaged, wearing a long brown dress, starched collar, and black velvet bequin, or nun's cap, was holding a conference with her husband, the counsellor, a very corpulent man, whose jovial face wore an habitual and insipid smile. Dressed in a morning gown, and with a nightcap secured to his head by a yellow ribbon, the counsellor appeared to listen to his wife not without deference, but still rather impatiently.

The lady held between her long fingers, a note which she was reading for the second time, with profound attention, apparently weighing the import of each word. The note was thus expressed:

"M. le marquis de Letorière will do himself the honour of calling at the house of madame la conseillére de Flacsinfingen, to-day, at noon, if she will condescend to receive him."

Having thus read it, she resumed: "Calling at the house of Madame la conseillére,—what audacity!"

"Nay, Martha," said the counsellor, with humility, "I cannot see what audacity there is in—"

"You cannot see! Oh! to be sure, you are so penetrating!—Cannot see that such a letter from a voluptuary, a debauchee, a Nebuchadnezzar, like the marquis de Letorière, is worse than insult?—Why, it's a premeditation, "as it were! a threat to be succeeded by insult!"

"How so, Martha?"

"Have you then forgotten all they say about this abominable man, who leaves behind him weeping maidens, and guilty wives? Do you not know that he is a Pharaoh, who thinks to fascinate you by a glance of his evil eye,—a licentious Tarquin, who, the very first time he meets a female, dares to address her in the language of intrigue?

"The fact is, he is one of those brisk gallants, whom husbands, fathers, and mothers, consign to perdition, twenty times a day, he, he, he!" replied the counsellor, chuckling.

This untimely fit of mirth was severely punished by his lady, who pinched him unmercifully, and exclaimed:

"And you are wretch enough to laugh, when you have under your very eyes, a

proof that this reprobate intends to crown his diabolical triumphs by attacking the honour of your wife!"

The counsellor in utter amazement clasped his hands and gazed steadily at his wife.

"Attack your honour, Martha! Eh! merciful Heaven! who thinks of doing that!"

"Oh! what a man! what a man! Listen, then! And she read the letter for the third time: "M. de Letorière will do himself the honour of calling at the house of Madame la conseillére, &c."

"Do you understand it now? at the house of Madame—Is it clear to you yet? It is not upon the counsellor, that he wishes to call, but the counsellor's lady. 'Tis therefore a kind of assignation that he makes with me; he does not conceal it; he uses no prevarication, he shamelessly avows it; and you, you do not even stir at this, but sit there in perfect indifference to the affront! Go to, Flacsinfingen, you are not worthy to have a virtuous wife! Ask an interview with me! The wanton!" repeated the counsellor's lady, indignantly.

"Why, Martha, do you seriously think that the marquis would attempt——? Come, come, you are mad,—absolutely mad!" cried the counsellor, impatiently. "If he does request an interview with you, it is for no other purpose than to speak about the lawsuit; nothing can be plainer than this is. He knows, as well as every body else, that I place entire confidence in you, in fact, that you lead me by the nose. Well! in order to work upon me, he very naturally wishes to work upon you first, Martha.

"Work upon me! indeed, I would resist him at the peril of my life!" exclaimed the counsellor's lady, with the air of a heroine.

At that moment a carriage was heard to stop at the door.

"Heavens! 'tis he!" cried the lady, supporting herself on the arm of her husband's chair. "My blood freezes in my veins. Flacsinfingen, do not leave me: in the name of Heaven! defend me."

But the carriage proceeded on its way; it was a false alarm.

Martha raised her hand to her brow, and said with emotion:

"My heart failed me, I confess; but fear will sometimes overpower us."

"Nay, then, since you are so afraid of this marquis, why receive him, why meet him face to face?" asked the counsellor, very naturally.

"Why, why?" replied Martha, with a look of supreme contempt at her husband. "He asks me why! None but a soul absorbed in gluttony would suggest such a question! Why is the warrior dishonoured who basely flies before the foe? Why is the righteous one who hath fought valiantly preferred before him who hath not striven? Why do the Scriptures, (and Martha shewed her Bible, which was opened at the book of Judges), why doth the Scriptures say: "Ye that offer yourselves willingly for the avenging of Israel, bless the Lord. Speak, ye that ride on the white asses, ye that sit in judgment, and walk (without fear) by the way——"

"But," cried the counsellor, impatiently interrupting his wife, "but once again, I say you are mad! Who is there that thinks of fighting with you upon such an animal as that, of attacking you, or striving with you, or trying you by fire? Is it likely that at your age any one—Ah, bah!—come now, you'll make me say something that will affront you, Martha."

"Yes, yes! add insult to vulgarity; nothing would astonish me—coming from you."

"But again I say, do not receive this marquis, do not admit him!" cried the exasperated counsellor; my mind is made up to sustain the rights of the German princes, since you will have it so. Nothing that this Nebuchadnezzar, this Pharaoh, this Tarquin, may say or leave unsaid, will alter the case. Rest assured that I do not want him to attack you, or you to resist, in order to be convinced that you are the most virtuous wife in all Germany. Therefore, think no more about it, shut your door, and let me attend to these furnaces; my appetite warns me that it is near noon, and I reckon so much upon a baked pie, with currant jelly sauce, that I dreamed of it all night."

Having heard her husband out, Mme. de Flacsinfingen replied with an air of calm and concentrated disdain: "I can easily conceive, sir, that you should think of nothing but the gratification of your sensuality, when your wife's virtue is threatened. I myself, then, will undertake to defend your honour and my own. Like Judith I will defy this Holofernes, and like her will say: 'Grant me, O Lord, enough of constancy in my heart to despise, and strength wherewith to destroy— "

"See there!—he's Holofernes now," cried the counsellor.

"But notwithstanding my resolution," continued Martha, "I am but a weak woman, after all, and this miscreant is capable of resorting to the most frightful excesses—all that I ask of you is, to arm yourself well, and be ready to succour me, if my efforts should unfortunately prove ineffectual!"

"But, Martha, take courage, be not afraid· you can see yourself only by reflection. Let me, then, as your glass, discover to you that you have a certain look—a certain indescribable something about you—which will prevent, even the most rash, from treating you with disrespect. So that I have no need to arm myself in order—"

"You know that what I will, I will," said Mme. Flacsinfingen, interrupting her husband, and darting at him a look that seemed to leave him no power of resistance. "Although I regret extremely the postponement of your dinner hour, do you go and bring an arquebuse, and having hidden yourself under the table, witness the interview. Be ready to come to my aid, in case of need, when I cry, "Help, Flacsinfingen!"

"Hide myself under the table with an arquebuse! For what purpose? Gracious Heaven! I—"

"What I tell you shall be, shall be, sir!"

This scene took place in the counsellor's study! a considerable number of arms, such as were used in the middle ages, hung upon the wainscot, as objects of curiosity.

The counsellor's lady chose an arquebuse and a poniard, which she laid on the table; she examined for some time a Persian buckler and a steel breast-plate, and was on the point of equipping herself with these defensive weapons, in order to resist more effectually the expected attacks of the marquis: but considering herself well enough provided with the poniard, she stepped up to her husband.

"The poniard is for me; the arquebuse for you. Jael had only a nail for a weapon; Judith, a sword; Dalilah, a pair of scissors; Martha shall have a poniard."

"But, Martha, take care; that arquebuse has remained loaded ever since the day I tried it. Merciful Heaven! what is the use of all this preparation?"

Another carriage stopped at the door. The counsellor's lady felt a strong emotion of terror when her servant came and said: "Madam, a French marquis wishes to speak with you."

"O Heavens!—'tis he—, courage, then!" she said to herself, and then added aloud; "when I ring, Clara, shew the stranger in."

When the servant had left the room, Mme. Flacsinfingen solemnly embraced her husband, and said in a tone of deep emotion:

"Now, now, Flacsinfingen, the time is come—shoulder your arquebuse, and Heaven preserve me!"

She then raised the cover, and by a gesture directed her husband to slip under the table.

"But, wife, I shall be suffocated under there,—this is absurd!"

"Do you hear me!" said Martha, in a commanding tone.

"Yes, but this is folly—"

"Flacsinfingen, do you hear me!" repeated his lady in a fury, seizing her husband's arm, and rendering each word more emphatic, by a hearty pinch.

"Zounds! I must be as weak, as foolish as you, to give in to this contrivance," said the counsellor, rubbing his arm, and squeezing himself under the table with no little difficulty.

"Now, when I cry: 'Help, Flacsinfingen!' you come out from there, and fire upon the Philistine!" said his wife; she then dropped the table-cover, which stifled the last murmurs of the counsellor.

Having made sure of this concealed auxiliary, Martha made very able preparations for defence. She took care that the table under which the counsellor lay, should be between her and her dreaded adversary. She moreover contrived to be flanked by a couple of chairs, and to have a screen on the rear of her: the Toledo poniard also was placed within her reach.

It was then the counsellor's lady rang her bell, with a throbbing heart, and this whispered admonition to her spouse: "Hold yourself in readiness, Flacsinfingen!"

Some inarticulate sounds proceeded from under the table-cover, the door opened, Letorière entered, and Martha laid her hand upon her weapon.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE INTERVIEW.

On this occasion, also, the metamorphosis of the marquis was complete. He did not appear to be more than twenty years of age; his chesnut hair without powder, and parted in the middle, encompassed his charming face, which now wore an expression of artless simplicity and ingenuousness. He was dressed in black, his eyes were cast down with seeming timidity, and fumbling his hat between his hands with an embarrassed air, he remained standing at the door, apparently afraid to set a step.

Madam Flacsinfingen, with an angry and determined look, and one hand upon the hilt of her poniard, awaited, as she thought, the entrance of a bold and dashing nobleman, of pert demeanor and fluent speech; but to her utter amazement, there appeared a youth of remarkable beauty, and so timid withal, that he hesitated to approach her.

Unwilling to trust even her eyes in this case, and fearing that there was some mistake, Martha addressed him in a shrewish tone:

"Are you indeed the Marquis Letorière?"

Yes, madame la conseillère," he answered, in a faltering voice, without raising his eyes, and blushing deeply.

"Do you come from France?"

"Yes, madame la conseillère; I have been here three days."

The clear, soft, and youthful tones which

her inquiries drew forth, redoubled Martha's astonishment: she let go her weapon, leaned towards the marquis, and said to him in a somewhat milder voice:

"Are you, in short, the M. de Letorière, who comes to solicit us respecting a lawsuit?"

"Yes, madame la conseilère."

"A suit against the dukes of Brunswick and Brandebourg?"

"Yes, madame la conseillère."

These responses, made with a simplicity that bordered upon folly, and stammered forth with all the external signs of diffidence, restored Martha's courage; she rose and even advanced a step or two towards the door, saying to the marquis:

"But come nearer, sir."

Letorière raised for the first time his full, soft and melancholy eyes, and fixed them for a few seconds upon the counsellor's lady, then cast them down again, so as to leave them veiled by his long dark lashes. Never in her life, had Martha encountered a look so soft and captivating. She was moved, and said to the marquis with a sort of testy impatience:

"Draw nearer, sir,—one would really say I frightened you—'

"Oh, no! madame la conseillère; you do not frighten me, for the virtuous woman is an excellent portion, and she shall be given to man for his good deeds, saith the scripture."

"He quotes the scriptures!" exclaimed Martha, with admiration; and she resumed, now at ease:

"Do I overawe you, then?"

"Nay, madam—but your presence is so imposing.—You resemble one of the daughtere of our king so strongly, that my heart beats in spite of me;" and the marquis laid his hand gracefully on his heart.

"Upon my word, I can scarcely speak. Oh! be not offended with me, madam; we cannot always master our feelings," said Letorière, looking timidly and imploringly at the counsellor's lady, who felt highly flattered at the effect which she had produced, and no less so at her imputed resemblance to one of the daughters of the French king.

"Am I awake or dreaming?" said Martha to herself. "Is this the shameless, daring, remorseless libertine?—But perhaps he is beguiling me, and this apparent innocence is but an abominable deception of the evil spirit!—the cunning of the tiger, who approaches his prey with stealing pace, the better to seize and devour it!"

As these thoughts occurred to her mind, the counsellor's lady, imitating to a certain degree, in her retreat, the oblique and wary movement of the tiger, prudently regained her den—that is to say, the table, and whispered to her husband: "Prepare your weapon, Flacsinfingen—the moment approaches."

There was a slight shaking of the table-cover, but it was impossible to tell whether it proceeded from the counsellor's shouldering his arquebuse, or from a mere gesture of impatience.

Martha had no sooner entrenched herself thus within reach of her poniard, than she resumed her imperious tone and lowering look, and said harshly to Letorière: "Well! sir, what is it you want? My husband is convinced that the claims of the German princes are just, and all your proceedings will be fruitless."

"Farewell, then, madame, since you will not deign to hear me. I have no hope left—Alas! alas! how unhappy am I!"

The marquis, covering his face with his hands, approached the door with an air of deep dejection. This movement, so far from indicating anything like hostile intentions, together with his look of utter despondency, lulled all Martha's suspicions, and sallying once more from behind her breastwork, she stepped up to the marquis, and said to him in a softened, but still rather peevish tone:

"Who said I would not listen to you, young man? Why do you go away? Although the success of your suit is doubtful, it is my husband's duty to examine into your claims. Confide in me—take courage; have I so terrible a look?—Come, sit down by me; don't be afraid." And saying thus, Martha took the marquis by the hand, and led him slowly to a chair, repeating as she did so: "Take courage, you must not be timid, my child."

At that moment a loud burst of laughter was heard, the table cover was *suddenly raised*, and the fat counsellor, with arquebuse in hand, emerged from his hiding place, exclaiming with a fresh fit of merriment:

"Where's your poniard? where's your coat of mail? where's your buckler, Martha! 'Tis you, now, that are obliged to cheer up this Pharaoh! this Nebuchadnezzar—Ha! ha! ha! behold Judith bringing comfort to Holofernes!"

However startling and incomprehensible to Letorière, this sudden apparition of the counsellor might be, it was with difficulty that he refrained from laughing too, at the grotesque figure of Flacsinfingen. But Martha, maddened and humiliated by her husband's coarse allusion to the precautions she had taken so unnecessarily, rushed upon him with an infuriated air, exclaiming:

"Are you not ashamed of having recourse to such vile means, to act the spy upon your wife? Oh! the hateful tyrant! the jealous abomination! Did I ever give him reason to doubt my virtue?" And Martha, raising her eyes, called upon Heaven to

witness the injustice of the poor counsellor, who, completely stunned by these unexpected reproaches, stood gaping, with the arquebuse still in his hand.

"Why, what is all this, wife?" said he, "'Twas you ——"

"I'll hear nothing," cried Martha, seizing him by the arm; "leave me ——"

"But —— at all events——"

"Begone, sir, begone! your presence is hateful to me!" And Martha pushed her husband rudely towards the door of a closet adjoining the room in which this scene took place.

"But, wife!" said the counsellor, still resisting.

"And before this young man, too! Good Heavens! what will he think of me!" cried Martha.

"By the furies! 'twas you that—"

"To lie there like a traitor, with a murderous weapon!" added Martha.

"Nay, once for all,—let me tell you"—and the counsellor, losing ground, was thrust against the door.

"A downright ambuscade! worthy of an Italian bandit!" continued Martha, seeming to shudder at the thought.

"And yet, I vow, 'twas you yourself, wife, that—"

"An aulic counsellor, to act such a part! He! I'm horror-struck—; begone! begone!" And after a pretty long contest, Flacsinfingen disappeared at last, behind the closet door, which his wife barred upon him.

"Nay, now!" said Letorière, smiling to himself, when he found that he was alone with Martha, "'tis no longer she, but I myself, egad! that may soon want a champion—I very much regret the loss of the man with the arquebuse," he added, looking around him with something like apprehension. Martha turned towards him, lowering her eyes like an offended prude:

"Pity the confusion, sir, which I cannot but feel at the scene you have witnessed!—Alas! my husband is so unfortunately jealous—horribly jealous! Heaven knows! without the slightest cause. He is in fact so visionary in that respect, that knowing I was to have an interview with you—with a young gentleman"—and Martha hesitated—"who, they say, is so—I mean—whose reputation is such;—in short—my husband hid himself—for the purpose of—But, oh dear! you understand—you know the rest."

"Yes, madam, I had been informed that M. le Conseiller was very jealous," said the marquis, timidly.

"You were informed of that?" echoed Martha, mincingly.

"Yes, madam, they told me that M. le conseiller was very jealous of the influence which you exercised over his clients, who always addressed themselves to you rather than to him. You are known to be so kind, —so correct in your judgment—And yet your husband ought to bless you daily; for the Scriptures saith: 'Happy is the man that hath a good wife,' and that 'the number of his years shall be multiplied.'"

This was pronounced with such an expression of virgin innocence, and in so soft and devout an accent, that the astonished Martha, after gazing long and steadily at his enchanting face, said to herself: "He is verily a pascal lamb! Poor innocent!—scripture texts always in his thoughts—how he interests me!"—And she resumed aloud:

"Tell me how it is that your parents allow one so young as you to travel alone! Why do they leave to one so inexperienced, the cares of an important lawsuit?"

"Alas, madam, I am an orphan,—poor, and without protectors,—no friend or guide have I but my old preceptor."

"But with such interesting qualities as you possess, how have you acquired such a character as yours?"

"I, madam?" asked Letorière, with angelic simplicity, "what character, for Heaven's sake?"

The counsellor's lady remained stupified at these replies; she could easily conceive that common rumours should be liable to exaggeration, but that a youth so unsophisticated, so religiously brought up, should pass for a licentious libertine, was what she could not comprehend.

"Have you no relation of your own name at the French court?" she anxiously inquired.

"No, madam"—

"It must be these German princes that have circulated these reports with a view to injure their opponent," thought Martha. "But tell me, what steps have you taken as yet?"

"Alas! madam—very useless ones—I first called on baron Henferester"—

"Just Heaven!—poor lad, and did you venture into the cave of that horrid Polyphemus?"

"Yes, madam, and oh! didn't he frighten me!"—

"Come, come, tell me all; and do so without reserve, for my husband and I, you must know, heartily detest the baron."

"I was not aware of that, madame—so that I was afraid to tell you"—

"Nay, nay! tell me the whole of it."

"Well! madam, I went to the chateau of Henferester. The baron began by laughing at me because I went in a post-chaise, and not on horseback."

"The ugly centaur! he fancies that every body, like himself, is made of iron and steel," said Martha, contemptuously.

"When I began to speak to him respecting my suit, he said to me in his loud voice: Let's sit down at table first—we can talk better with a hand on the tankard."

"That's just like him—the drunkard!"

"Not daring to contradict the baron, I took my place at table; but at the risk of displeasing him, by-the-by, as he had omitted to ask a blessing, I requested permission to do it."

"Poor little martyr!—Well, well, my child! the beast allowed you to ask it, I hope!"

"Yes, madam; but he scoffed at me afterwards, and I could not help feeling offended"——

"I should think not, indeed—Poor sheep, where had you wandered to, well-a-day!"

"As I ate very little, the baron said to me, 'What! have you dined?'—'No, sir, but the scripture saith: 'Be not over hasty at the feast.'"

"And you answered the glutton well, my child; but you might have added by way of prophecy, that sleeplessness, pains and colic, are the portion of the intemperate, for I really wish him as much, the brute beast," added Martha.

"Then, madam, he gave me a large cup brimful of pure wine, telling me to pledge him—'Nay, sir,' said I, "I never drink wine unmixed.' With that, madam, he burst into a laughing fit, and replied: 'No matter—drink now—to your mistress!'"

"To talk thus to a lad of his age—what an abominable corrupter!" cried the counsellor's lady, with uplifted hands.

"I did not understand what he meant; but I dipped my lips in the great goblet, and placed it on the table again quite disconcerted." The baron then said to me with a side look, and in his thick voice: "You don't drink wine, you don't eat, and you don't talk. Perhaps you will be more communicative between a cup of kirchwasser and a well filled pipe of tobacco."

"Kirch-wasser and a pipe! Oh, the old cossack! To try to lead this lad, who is more like a girl than a young man, into his old-soldier habits!"

"When I told the baron that I never drank strong liquors, and never smoked, he began to curse in such a manner as made me blush for him, and he said to me: 'You don't smoke and you don't drink; I see we shall never come to a good understanding; for I feel no interest for people who are not like myself! Any how, are you a sportsman?' Yes, baron, I have hunted larks with a looking glass. This reply, madam, made him laugh and swear worse than before, and he added: 'Young man, excuse my frankness, but the chatélain of Henferester would rather never again handle a glass, a bridle, or a hunting knife, than to interest himself for a lark-catcher. I can do nothing for you.' And so you see, madam, I left the baron, and came back in despair."

"And did you not call on Doctor Sphex?" said Martha, reflecting.

Yes, madam; but the first thing he asked me was whether I was conversant with profane literature, and a certain pagan author named Persius, who, I have been told, is unfit to be read by young persons like me. I told him I was not; whereupon he declared my cause was a bad one, and that my adversaries had clear rights and titles. I had therefore no more hope in him than in the other."

The counsellor's lady was deeply affected.

"Listen, my child," said she to the marquis; "you interest me more than I can express. I am sorry to see the other counsellors so opposed to your claims; but I cannot help it; all that I can do, is to try and ensure you my husband's vote."

"Oh! madam, will you really be so good!" cried Letorière, with the liveliest expression of gratitude. "Oh! well may the Scripture say: 'The strong woman is the joy of her husband; she shall make all the years of his life to pass in peace.' Yes, madam, for I will bless your husband, and he will be proud to have to thank you for having made the good cause to triumph."

"Scripture again! he is really a little pastor," said Martha, fondly. "But," she added, "do not go and entertain unfounded hopes, and do not despair either. The baron and doctor may yet lay aside their prejudices;" and Martha continued, speaking to herself: "How painful it is to me to deceive him thus! He has but little chance, and yet I have not the heart to discourage him."

"Ah! madam," cried Letorière, throwing himself on his knees, "I feel that you are my good angel. It is to you I will attribute all the good fortune that may happen to me henceforward. Mercy! how good and generous you are, madam! Let me here at your feet, thank you again and again."

Martha in deep emotion, turned away her head, and said softly to the marquis as she gave him her hand to kiss:

"Come, come! my son, get up; remain no longer in such a posture."

The marquis, still on his knees, resolutely took the offered hand, and raised it to his lips, shutting his eyes, and saying in an impassioned and grateful tone, "oh! madam, how can I thank you for such kindness?"

"There, there! little fool," said Martha, gently disengaging her hand, and giving Letorière a playful box on the ear. "Do you want to make me repent of my kindness?"

From the moment that the marquis fell upon his knees before Martha, the jolly face of the counsellor might be seen, still armed with his arquebuse, and gradually rising through an oval window over the door of the closet that served as his prison. When he saw his wife so little inclined to resort

to her poinard in order to repulse the Tarquin, the Holofernes, the Nebuchadnezzar, and what not, the counsellor determined to have merry vengeance for his incarceration, and so fired his arquebuse in the air, saynig:—"Martha, did'nt I hear you cry, 'help! Flacsinfingen!'" then leaning upon the window-frame, he fell into an immoderate fit of laughter.

His lady, exasperated at this practical jest of her husband's, thought proper to faint.

Letorière rushed out to call for assistance, and left Martha in the hands of her women and husband, who, on seeing the serious result of his pleasantry, had jumped down in haste to beg pardon for his impertinence.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TRIAL.

On the day appointed for the trial of Letorière's case, the three counsellors repaired to the palace. Their vote was to be secret, and to be given in by ballot.

After the sitting, Henferester, Flacsinfingen, and Sphex coolly exchanged civilities, at the same time scrutinising each other with no little anxiety. For a moment, the doctor thought he would try and interest Flacsinfingen in Letorière's favour, but he was afraid he might compromise the interest of his protégé thereby, rather than advance it. Each of the counsellors had nearly the same feeling: they therefore concealed from each other the direction of their vote, and talked of things which had no reference to the suit.

"This fine young fellow will certainly lose it—will be the victim of my colleague's unjust partiality; but at all events, one vote shall be thrown in for him."

Such were the reflections which each judge made apart to himself.

When the vouchers had been again produced by the reporting commissioners, after a long sitting devoted to listening to and not discussing facts, the three counsellors rose and solemnly placed their votes in the urn.

The chatelain of Henferester, who presided in court that day, ordered the clerk to search the ballot. Each counsellor had written on a ticket the name of the party whose cause he espoused.

The clerk dived his hand into the urn, drew out a ticket and read: "The marquis de Letoriere."

"That's my vote," said each counsellor o himself. At the second drawing, the clerk read again: "The marquis de Letoriere."

A third time the clerk drew a ticket from the urn and read: "The marquis de Letoriere."

Words cannot express the look of utter amazement which rose to the countenances of the three judges.

The clerk recorded the judgment. All the legal formalities having been complied with, the counsellors again withdrew to their hall of deliberation.

Notwithstanding their satisfaction upon seeing the marquis gain his suit by a unanimous vote, they were strangely bewildered at this coincidence of opinion; and hastened to come to an explanation of the mystery.

"How the plague came you to vote for the marquis?" shouted the baron, addressing Flacsenfingen and Sphex, and gaping for an answer.

"I was just going to ask you the same question, baron," replied Sphex. "What could possibly lead you to such a decision? And you too, Flacsenfingen."

"With me, 'tis very different," said the chatelain. "Amongst ourselves we can speak frankly: and you will allow that when the balance of right is so nicely poised, a man may throw his predilections into the scale, may he not? Well! in sporting phrase, my dogs and the marquis's hunt together, and that is why I gave him my vote. In a word, he is a man whose character, whose manners, whose habits please me.—I promised it to him, though in despair of his gaining the suit thereby, feeling assured that you would both be hostile to him. I am delighted that he has come off victorious; but hang me if I understand how or why you came to support him!"

"The character and habits of the marquis please you?" repeated Sphex and Flacsenfingen at once, staring at the baron.

"Certainly,—never did a hardier huntsman sound trumpet in our forests,—never did a gayer companion or a thirstier soul drain his tankard "rubis sur l'ongle," as the French say.

The two counsellors laughed in the face of the chatelain. "He, a hardy huntsman!—a trumpeter!——poor young Latinest! friendless scholar," said Sphex, shrugging his shoulders and again bursting into a fit of merriment.

"A staunch tippler too!—a gay companion! the sober lad who quotes the Bible on all occasions! the timid stripling who could'nt look at my wife without blushing to his very ears!" said Flacsinfingen, with an ironical laugh.

"What's that?—the marquis, a man of letters,—a Latinist! He quote the Bible, and blush before a woman!" repeated the chatelain in turn, laughing uproariously at his colleagues. "Nay nay, my masters, you

are both mad, or rather you see every thing away through your spectacles." "You are mad yourself with your hunting horns and tankards!" cried Sphex impatiently; "what taste can a man like the marquis have for your drunken orgies and gladiator sports?" added the doctor, with a look of supreme contempt. "You would not have fallen into such an error, if you had heard him recite and comment upon the admirable verses of the king of Latin poets!"

"For my part," cried the infuriated baron, "I shall believe in what my own eyes have seen, and not in the visions of your sick imagination! In my presence, the marquis killed a stag with the best aimed thrust of a hunting-knife that ever brought a beast to the earth." In my presence, he blew a finer blast than ever came through the horn from the lungs of an imperial huntsman! In two days, I saw him drink more beer, more Rhenish wine, and more kirsch that you'll ever drink in your whole life, doctor Sphex! In company with me too, he rode my old Elphin, which many a squire would find difficult! So that once again I tell you, and you Flacsinfingen, that Letorière, the rough and roystering cavalier, knows two well the handling of whip, trumpet and tankard, to lose his time or grow pale over musty books or blush before a woman! Once again you are both shallow-pated dreamers ——"

At this apostrophe from the chatelain the other two counsellors clamoured in concert, and the dispute soon became so violent that the three speaking at once could not understand each other, and resorted to the grossest personalities.

It required the entrance of a constable to put an end to this singular conference.

The officer walked up to Flacsinfingen, and spoke to him in a whisper.

"Gentlemen," said the counsellor, "my wife desires to speak with me; if you will hear what she has to say, I am sure she will throw some light upon the subject, for she conversed for two hours with M. de Letorière. Listen to her, and you will see that what I assert is strictly true," added the counsellor.

"Let her enter, if she will," cried the chatelain. "But in spite of all the petticoats in Germany, I repeat that I saw Letorière kill a stag with his own hands, and drink as many rounds as myself!"

"And in spite of all the hunters, whippers-in, and drinkers of Germany," exclaimed doctor Sphex, "I maintain that I heard Letorière recite to me some verses from Persius, and comment upon them more eruditely than the most learned professors of our universities could have done! Moreover, baron, you will never make me believe, that a man so well lettered and of so refined a taste, would go and scour the forest like a poacher, and drink like a Hungarian hussar."

"And let me, in the teeth of all the professors, sportsmen, and drinkers of the empire, affirm, that I saw Letorière tremble like a child before my wife, who was obliged to coax him into courage: and that I heard him quote Scripture with all the sanctity of a pastor," cried the exasperated Flacsinfingen; "a glance at the marquis is sufficient to prove that in his look and demeanor there is nothing of the gladiator."

The counsellor's lady entered in the midst of these conflicting assertions.

"My wife will set you right without doubt," said Flacsinfingen; "she has as yet taken no part in the discussion, and—"

But Martha cut short the thread of his speech, and addressing herself to the baron and doctor, with an air of affability and congratulation—

"Nothing is talked of here in the palace, gentlemen, but the success of M. de Letorière's suit; allow me to compliment you upon this unanimity of opinion, so unexpected. Thanks to your wise union, gentlemen, it may be said that the cause of innocence and religion has prospered! For in my opinion, M. de Letorière is a beautiful personification of innocence and religion, morally and physically, if I may be allowed the expression, for he has the countenance of an angel."

"There! what did I tell you, gentlemen?" cried Flacsinfingen.

"What angel and child are you talking about, will you please to tell me, madam?" asked the baron.

The lady replied, somewhat peevishly, "I am talking, sir, of a poor youth, as well known to you as to me: for you tried to make him drink and smoke, and even make the pious lad join you in the chase, when he came to solicit you concerning his suit. Oh! I know all, monsieur le baron: but the angel bravely resisted your temptations; he drank water pure as his own soul, and was not afraid to remind you of duties which you had forgotten."

"'Sdeath, madam!" cried the chatelain, "you don't know—"

"I know all, I know all, I tell you!" returned the lady, with volubility; but I pardon you, seeing the ascendancy of virtue has alone sufficed to bring down your unjust prejudices."

The chatelain's face became almost purple, and he muttered to himself: "If this last ten minutes longer, I shall have an apoplectic fit, I am sure."

"But, madam," said Doctor Sphex, you are strangely mistaken—and—"

"And you too, sir," retorted the lady: "you gave him your vote, to be sure; and glory be to you for it. You have done well, but now tell me: how could you imagine

that a youth so piously brought up, and fed with the bread of life, the holy scriptures, could ever soil his chaste memory with any of your abominable heathenish literature! Why did you treat it as a crime in him, not to know the verses of a certain Persius, who, they say, is the most immodest of satirists?"

"By Hercules, madam! it was on the contrary that—"

"By Hercules!—there now!—what a horrible pagan oath!" cried the lady, raising her hands to heaven. "I know all, I tell you; But I say to you as I did to the baron: Since you have laid aside your unfounded prejudices—since you have united with my husband in bringing about the triumph of our innocent protégé—honour and glory be to you!!"

"My dear baron, I feel that this scene has dreadfully excited my nerves," said the doctor, turning pale, and catching at the chatelain's arms with a convulsive movement of impatience, "I am not well—"

"Nor I, doctor, I am suffocating—I am giddy. My head feels as though it would split—I must have fresh air!"

The door opened, and the usher announced that M. le marquis de Letorière requested the honour of paying his respects to the gentlemen of the council.

"'Tis Heaven that sends him to us!" exclaimed the lady; "let him enter! let the dear pascal lamb enter!"

"Yes, let us see this water-drinking lamb!" said the baron, with a sarcastic smile.

"Let us see this enemy to profane literature, forsooth!" said the doctor, in the same tone, and joyously rubbing his hands.

"Let us see this Nimrod," said Flacsinfingen.

"Nay, rather, you will see the pearl of young men," said Martha, in a tone of deep and unaffected conviction.

Letorière entered.

The surprise of the spectators was unbounded; they stood petrified as it were, and gazing at each other.

The marquis was dressed in a style of unusual elegance. He wore a sky-blue velvet coat, delicately embroidered with a leafy edging of gold and silver; his vest of silver tissue was spangled with gold, together with his small clothes, which were of the same color as his coat; white silk stockings, clothed with gold, red-heeled shoes, a golden mounted sword with embossed silver ornaments, a shoulder knot of blue, silver and gold, and a white plumed chapeau-bras, which the marquis held in his hand, completed this dazzling costume.

This perfect metamorphosis might alone have sufficed to overthrow all the conjectures, or rather to confuse all the recollections of the counsellors and Martha; but what still added to their astonishment, was the impossibility of their tracing in Letorière's face anything like the impression that had struck them individually. So that in the fascinating nobleman so richly clad, so sprightly and intelligent in look, and so elegant and graceful in figure, although a little effeminate, the baron could by no means recognise his rustic and slovenly hunter; the doctor looked in vain for his learned Latinist, and famished poet; and Lady Martha saw no more in the bright black eyes of the marquis, the timid and downcast look of the scripture quoting youth.

Letorière felt the necessity of putting a speedy end to his judges' astonishment, and said, as he respectfully saluted them:

"May I here be permitted, gentlemen, to express my warmest gratitude to you collectively, and reiterate the assurances thereof to each of you individually."

The three Germans could find no other expression than that which their countenances had borne since his entrance, and awaited in silence the close of this strange scene. Letorière advanced first towards Mme. Flacsinfingen, took her hand with an air of respectful gallantry, raised it to his lips, and said to her in a soft and serious voice: "I knew before-hand, madam, that in order to enlist your sympathy, to raise myself to a level with your exalted character, a pure and religious state of feeling was requisite—and in attempting to exhibit this in my deportment towards you, I have not been guilty of deception—I did but borrow for a moment your own style of language, and believe me, it is too dignified and too beautiful for me ever to forget it"—and he bowed respectfully.

"As for you, monsieur le baron, I have no other means of proving to you that I am still a member of the fraternity of jolly hunters, than that of inviting you to come next year and spend St. Hubert's day with me at my chateau d'Olbreuse. If you will deign to accompany M. le Baron," he added, turning to doctor Sphex, "we will resume our commentaries on our favorite poet. To conclude, Gentlemen, it has been hitherto from taste alone that I was fond of the chase, the perusal of the ancient poets and of the scriptures; it will henceforth be from the grateful recollection of your valuable support." With these words, Letorière again bowed to the three still speechless counsellors, and retired. Flushed with this success, which ensured his union with M'lle de Soissons, Letorière was returning to his lodgings, when the following note from the princess was put into his hand by a courier.

"The king is dying—my liberty, and our future happiness, are threatened—Come! Come!" Transported in a moment from a state of beaming hope to that of the darkest woe, the marquis set out for Paris.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUEL.

On the very day of his return to Paris, and whilst he was in the act of changing his dress, with the intention of repairing immediately to the presence of the king at Versailles, M de Letorière received a call from M. le baron d'Ugeon, a relation of M'me de Soubise. Accompanied by two seconds, he came to demand satisfaction of the marquis for his offensive conduct towards the maréchale, at the hotel de Soubise, before his departure for Germany.

Surprised at this recriminatory proceeding, for which he had not given the slightest cause, Letorière, without declining the challenge, declared that as he had but then returned at full speed from Kenna, in order to take a final leave of the king his master, who was said to be dying, he would not consent to meet the baron till after he had performed that sacred duty.

The marquis's bravery was too well known to admit of any demur at such a proposition. It was agreed, that when M. de Letorière was ready to accept the rencontre, his seconds should give the baron d'Ugeon notice thereof. Having despatched Dominque to the Abbey de Montmartre for the purpose of delivering a letter from him to the princess Julie, the marquis started for Versailles.

Louis XV. was dying of the purple small-pox.

This disease, so extremely contagious, and dreaded almost as much for the hideous traces which it left as for its frequently fatal termination, had spread such terror among the courtiers, that Letorière found the small apartments, occupied by the dying king, almost deserted. The panic was the greater from the fact, that vaccination was as yet unknown. It was with difficulty that the gentlemen-in-waiting could be kept at their posts. Louis XV. had expressly forbidden the Dauphin and other members of the royal family to approach his person, for fear of exposing them to the fatal contagion.

The viscount de T* *, one of the gentlemen of the king's bedchamber, and then in attendance, was stationed in a room that led to the royal apartment, when Letorière arrived, pale and painfully excited.

Forgetting on so awful an occasion the usages of court, the marquis was about to raise the glass-door which opened upon the sick chamber, when the viscount, stepping up in haste, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said to him in a whisper:

"Stop, sir: you have not the privilege of access to his majesty's bedroom."

"I am told, sir, that the king is almost deserted by his servants, who dread the contagion. If it be true that death reigns within there, one may surely enter without regard to the etiquette of court," said Letorière bitterly, and attempting to pass on.

"Again I tell you, sir, you cannot approach his Majesty. Neither do I know that he would consent to receive you."

"Go, then, and ask him, Sir; the king will not reject the services of one to whom he has ever been bountiful and kind."

This proposal to enter the monarch's chamber seemed to alarm M. de F***; he therefore answered the marquis haughtily, but still in a suppressed voice:

"I have orders to receive none but those admitted by the first gentleman-in-waiting."

At that moment a faint, but well known voice was heard to ask: "Who is there? Who is it whispering thus?"

"The king has heard you, Sir. You must answer for the consequences of this," said M. de F***; and he replied aloud:

"May it please your Majesty to pardon me if I answer without entering, having yourself given express orders to that effect. The person to whom I have been speaking, Sire, is—"

"Is Letorière, who beseeches of the king permission to approach him," said the marquis, in a somewhat louder tone, interrupting M. de F.

"Indeed—is it you, my son!—so soon returned?" cried Louis, with evident satisfaction. But quickly reflecting that he might expose the marquis to the danger of infection by allowing him access to his chamber, the prince added:

"No, no—the air of this apartment is fatal to life. Enter not, I forbid you."

"For the first time in my life, I will dare to disregard an order from my king. But I have a duty to fulfil and I will fulfil it," cried Letorière; and raising the glass door, he drew near the monarch's bed.

"Begone—begone this instant! unhappy youth!" exclaimed the prince, raising himself to a sitting posture, and pointing to the door with an air of command.

But Letorière hastily seized the monarch's hand in spite of his resistance, kissed it repeatedly and reverentially; and kneeling by the bedside, he said:

"Will the king pardon my boldness—but now he has no longer a motive for rejecting my services."

"Begone---leave me!" replied Louis, forcibly withdrawing his hand.

"Four years ago, I was happier; the king then deigned to let me kiss his royal hand in the garden of Versailles," said the marquis, with an accent of filial veneration.

"But four years ago, my hand could not, as now, communicate a dreadful disease; perhaps death itself," exclaimed Louis, with deep emotion.

Letoriere's heroic devotion affected this excellent prince the more deeply, because, with the exception of a few valets of his household, he had been abandoned by nearly all the courtiers.

The higher officers of the crown, whose duties placed them in immediate contact with his person, had but too faithfully obeyed his orders, which prohibited their remaining near him.

The fine features of the king, disfigured by the ravages of the disease, already betokened the near approach of death. In these, his last moments, the fatal dissensions and threatening political agitations which had obscured the close of his reign, painfully engrossed his thoughts. The noble and disinterested conduct of the marquis diverted him for a moment from these overpowering reflections. "You are a madman—you merit my severe displeasure, for daring to disobey me and exposing yourself thus;" cried Louis, more in sorrow than in anger, and casting an affectionate look at Letorière, who was still silently kneeling by his bedside.

"Let me not incur the king's displeasure! this is perhaps the only opportunity I may have of testifying my gratitude!"

"But I repeat, this malady is infectious; do you not see how I am abandoned, that I am alone, that I desire to be alone!" hastily added the prince with an evident bitterness of feeling, as if he wished to conceal his first thought; for the self-sacrificing devotion of Letorière rendered still more hideous to the king's eyes the ingratitude of his courtiers.

"Brave and noble heart!" said Louis, contemplating his young friend with painful interest. "You know no fear---you, at least are faithful."

"Will the king then recompense my fidelity by granting me what he denies to others,—the privilege of serving him, of remaining with him?" asked Letorière, clasping his hands imploringly.

"It must be so now," said Louis, and then added in an almost despairing tone: "But you are young! you have beauty! you are beloved! and all this you risk for the sake of being near me! All this, and more, perhaps, you sacrifice for me, poor youth!—whilst so many others"—and after a moment's pause, he added: "The Dauphin has already—I doubt not—a crowd around him, ready to salute Louis XVI."

"What says your Majesty?"

"'Tis the fate of dying kings, my friend. Alas! to die and be forgotten are not my greatest fears—would to Heaven they were so! But France,—France—what will become of my poor kingdom? And my grandson, what is his sad destiny?"

"France has named you, sire, THE WELL-BELOVED; you may yet live long to wear the well-earned title, and the Dauphin will one day—"

"I do not deceive myself—I am feeble, I am approaching my end," interrupted Louis, shaking his head sorrowfully," and I believe, too, that certain deaths are portentous. The maréchal d'Armentières and the marquis de Chauvelin, died suddenly before me,—in my cabinet; these are Heavenly warnings."

"Banish the thought, sire. This disease is dangerous; but care ——"

"Care will not avail, I feel, I know it well; it it this which makes the thought of having vainly placed your life in jeopardy, so dreadful to me,—but now it is too late. Your imprudence—no, your generous devotion, has rendered all regret useless. But tell me—I have heard with pleasure of the success of your suit. There can be now no obstacle to your union with the princess Julie. Oh! I have had to break many a lance for you with the maréchale and the whole house of Savoy," added Louis, with a gentle and benevolent smile. "I have had to use all my authority, in order to prevent their withdrawing M'lle de Soissons from the abbey de Montmartre."

"How gracious on the part of your majesty to think——"

"'Tis now the time or never—to-morrow it may be too late. My only fear is, that when I am gone, the princess Julie will have no support from my grandson. But if Heaven grant me a few days longer, I will see to it; it will be gratifying to me to leave you as happy as you deserve to be, my young friend."

The king's disease made rapid and fatal progress, and Letorière did not leave him for a minute. It is needless to say with what tender, respectful and touching solicitude, he watched the dying king. The sight of him appeared to soothe the sufferings of Louis XV. He repeatedly extended his hand to him in silent gratitude. Soon all hope of saving the prince vanished, and Letorière witnessed with a fixed and tearful eye the agony and death of the sovereign, who had evinced for him all the kindness of a father.

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After the death of Louis XV. the marquis de Letorière hastily took his departure from Versailles, intending to go to Paris, and thence to the abbey de Montmartre, to visit the princess Julie. On his way thither he felt an alternate sensation of extreme heat, succeeded by an icy coldness; but attributed this indisposition to the painful emotions that had so recently agitated him. He had no sooner arrived than he questioned Dominique respecting the princess. Louis XV

on his death bed had but too well foreseen what would be her position. His successor had ordered the provost of France to despatch an exempt to the abbey de Montmartre, for the purpose of preventing Mll'e de Soissons from leaving it, or receiving any visitors who should not be furnished with an authorisation from M'me de Soubise. Dominique had therefore been unable to see the princess, or deliver the letter from the marquis.

This intelligence fell like a thunderbolt upon Letorière's ear. He doubtless relied much on M'lle de Soisson's firmness of character; but he also knew the power of the House of Savoy, and the influence of Mme. de Soubise at the new court. He was absorbed in these bitter reflections, when the seconds of M. le baron d'Ugeon came to ask at what hour it would be convenient for him to grant their friend the promised rencontre. It gave the marquis a cruel pang to be obliged to incur the chances of a duel before he had once more seen the princess Julie: but he had already asked for one delay, and felt that he could not demand a second.

He therefore engaged to be in readiness the next day, at three in the afternoon, with his witnesses, behind the walls of the farm des Mathurins, at that time a very retired spot.

The marquis had six and thirty hours before him: during which interval, he hoped to be able to find some means of seeing M lle de Soissons, or at least of conveying a letter to her.

Dame Landry was despatched to the abbey de Montmartre, disguised as a female pedlar; with a complete assortment of lawns, cambrics, crapes, ribbons, and lace. In order to make favour with the nun who kept the gate, she gave her a handsome kerchief. The delighted sister promised to let her into the courtyard in the afternoon, when the ladies should be taking their usual walk: and assured her that she would meet with purchasers amongst them. Madeleine inquired what ladies of quality resided at the abbey. The doorkeeper mentioned the princess Julie.

"Is not Mme. Martha, M'lle de Soissons' nurse, with her?" asked the tailor's wife.

"To be sure she is," replied the sister, and you will see her in a moment, for she almost always comes down about this time to wait upon her mistress.

"Because I have a recommendation to M'lle Martha," said Madeleine," and I am sure, that with her good word, I might sell the princess several articles: I have first and foremost, there—a piece of lace that would set off the dress of a queen;" and the tailoress half opened a case, and showed the sister a splendid sample of lace.

"Heavens! how beautiful it is! Why, my lord Archbishop does not wear finer on his sleeves, when he comes to officiate here."

"Perhaps, indeed," said Madeleine, "the princess might buy this curiosity, (for so it is) to make a present of to monseigneur; at least the person that recommended me to dame Martha told me so."

"Here she is, just in time," said the doorkeeper. Martha approached with a sad and sullen look.

"Here's a pedlar who comes recommended to you, madam Martha. She has the handsomest lace you ever saw."

"I don't want any," said Martha, with a look of annoyance.

"But, madam," replied Madeleine, hesitating and trying to make a sign of intelligence to the nurse, "I was told the princess wanted to buy some lace and—"

"You were deceived, or rather you are trying to deceive me, neighbour," answered Martha, peevishly. "You look like one of those tramping pedlars that take care never to call again on their customers, to know whether they are satisfied with what they have bought."

"You would'nt compare me to one of those paltry creatures, madame," said Madeleine, still making her telegraphic signs; "if you knew who recommended me to you—

"Who was it?"

"M. le marquis de Letorière."

On hearing this name, dame Martha exchanged a quick but meaning glance with Madeleine. The two women understood each other. The door-keeper knew nothing of the name or even the existence of the marquis; but fearful of exerting suspicion if she yielded too soon at the mention of this name, the nurse replied in a surly tone:

"Go, and deceive some one else, gossip; I don't know your marquis."

"And yet he is nephew to the abbé du Vighan," resumed Madeleine.

"Nephew to the abbé du Vighan!—that's very different; why did'nt you say so sooner? The abbé du Vighan's nephew would recommend none but honest people. And what have you to sell?"

"This piece of lace;" said Madeleine. casting a significant glance at Martha. 'Tis good and handsome from one end to the other; the princess may unroll it, she will not find a blemish."

"I'll go and shew it to her; and have you nothing else?"

"Nothing that your mistress cares about."

"Wait till I return," said Martha.

Enveloped in this roll of lace was a letter from the marquis; he therein inquired of Julie by what means he could procure an interview with her. M'lle de Soissons in reply told him, that she considered herself his wife in the sight of Heaven, and that she was determined to escape from the

bbey if possible, in spite of the surveillance of which she was the object. She could at any hour go to pray in the chapel. This chapel was separated from the cloister by a long subterranean passage. A certain part of the cloister wall, which M'lle de Soissons pointed out, might be scaled from the field on the outside; which being effected, the door of the subterranean passage would be discovered near a fountain. Having forced this door, the way to the chapel was clear. M'lle de Soissons informed Letorière that at one o'clock, each night, she would wait for him there, in order to bind herself to him by a vow made at the foot of the altar, and to devise the means of escaping to England from the persecutions of her family.

Julie put this letter, penned in haste, under cover of the roll of lace, which Martha gave back to Madeleine, telling her that the princess did not find the quality fine enough.

Being thus apprised of M'lle de Soissons' determination, the marquis sent for Jerome Sicard to examine the localities of the abbey. The walls of the cloister were very lofty; but surrounded as they were by swampy and deserted grounds, they might be scaled, without, in all probability, attracting notice. Unfortunately, the preparations indispensable to this adventure did not allow the marquis to attempt it till the following night.

For the first time he feared death, as he reflected that the duel might take place before his interview with M'lle de Soissons.

Letorière passed a night of painful agitation; strange visions haunted his sleep, and he awoke feeble and dispirited. For the first time he thought it not improbable that he had become the victim of contagion, and of his devotion to Louis XV. His physician, indeed, detected alarming symptoms of purple small-pox; but stated that the disease would not be fully developed in him till the following day. The misconception of a point of honour on the part of the marquis made him obstinately persist in his intention of fighting the baron that day, in spite of his weakness and the advice of his two witnesses.

At a quarter past three the rencontre took place; the marquis's friends, seeing that his debility increased, and that a feverish flush overspread his face, thought it their duty to appeal to the manly feeling of M. d'Ugeon, and request a postponement of the affair, without, however, informing Letorière of the proceeding. But a harsh and offensive reply from the baron as to this new delay, having rendered all conciliation impracticable, the combat began. Letorière was a perfect master of the weapon, his valour had been proved; but the rapid progress of contagion had already so debilitated him, that his advantages were thrown away; and he received a sword-thrust, full in the breast. His seconds conveyed him home, and left him to the care of poor Dominique.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ABBEY.

The cloister bell of the abbey de Montmartre tolled eleven. The night was stormy; the sky grey and overcast, notwithstanding the moonlight which gleamed at long intervals through the dingy wind-rent clouds. On her way from her apartment to the chapel, M'lle de Soissons had to cross an open gallery, the vaulted arches of which fronted upon one of the inner yards of the abbey.

In the midst of this court-yard stood the tomb of the countess d'Egmont, the charming ill-fated daughter of the maréchal de Richelieu. The princess Julie had received, by the help of her nurse and dame Landry, a brief written intimation from Letorière, that he would do all in his power to effect an entrance into the abbey that very night. As the sound of the bell struck her ear, M'lle de Soissons, agitated by an inexplicable presentiment, knelt in prayer upon the steps of the tomb of M'me d'Egmont. She momentarily awaited the arrival of the marquis, through the subterranean passage to the chapel. No sound interrupted the deep silence but that of the wind howling through the vaulted arches. In spite of her resolution, notwithstanding the noble and religious motives that actuated her conduct, notwithstanding her unsullied purity of soul, the princess could scarcely repress a feeling of terror at having consented to an interview with Letorière in the chapel of the abbey. She now regarded it as sacrilege. This feeling having gradually subsided, gave place to one of anxiety, of agonising suspense.

A solitary lamp, which burned in the chapel, cast a doubtful light through the shadowy aisles. M'lle de Soissons, kneeling by the door that communicated with the secret passage to the cloister, listened eagerly in that direction. At length she heard the sound of footsteps—the lock was forced, and Letorière appeared before the princess, who could not repress a cry of surprise and affectionate welcome.

"My doubts are past—I see you again—my love!" she cried, with delirious joy, and then quickly added, "but come into the gallery, let us leave this holy place."

When by the light of the moon she was enabled to see the marquis, the paleness of

nis countenance struck her forcibly. He was wrapped in a brown cloak, and appeared to walk with difficulty. In spite of the wound he had so recently received, in spite of the progress of his disease, regardless of the tears and supplications of Dominique, the marquis, accompanied by Jerome Sicard, had succeeded in scaling the walls of the abbey.

"Do I again behold you, then, my Julie?" said he, with a voice of inexpressible tenderness.

"Yes, and soon to part no more, love!" said the princess, offering him her hand.

"My hand—no—no—just Heaven!" cried Letorière, recoiling in terror, and muffling himself more closely still in his cloak.

The astonished princess looked at him in silence.

"Julie—Julie—pardon me—that I shrink thus from you—but having heard of the king's sickness, and that he was abandoned by all, I went to him, and did not leave his chamber for a moment till he died."

"Alas! I see it all!" exclaimed the princess. "This terrible disease is infectious, and your life perhaps—and our united happiness, will be the price of your devoted loyalty!"

"No, no, be comforted, Julie. All hope is not lost. Although suffering, I resolved to see you, that I might put an end to your suspense, and tell you I had gained my suit, and that there was now no obstacle to our happiness."

"None—none, but death, perhaps!" cried the princess despairingly. "My God! my God! in what agony of suspense shall I live!"

"Say not so—Madeleine Landry will try and give Martha news of me daily. You see I am not seriously ill, or I could not have come," said the marquis, faintly.

"I cannot live in such torturing doubt," replied the princess, "I will fly with you this very night."

"Julie, 'tis impossible—no preparations have been made. In Heaven's name, I implore you, wait. Do not endanger our common welfare by an unadvised proceeding."

"But do I not see that you are suffering horribly? I will not leave you in such a state—I cannot. I have energy—I have courage; where you have passed, I can pass. Having effected my escape from the abbey, I will seek the protection of the bailli de Solar. They dare not force me openly from the Sardinian Ambassador, if I throw myself upon his hospitality. There, at least, each day, each hour, I shall hear of you."

"Again I tell you, Julie—it must not be," said Letorière, tottering towards the tomb of Mme. de Egmont, and leaning upon one of the pillars for support.

"And can you think," resumed M'lle de Soissons, with a sublimity of look and tone, "can you think that I, who for five years have watched your every step with the solicitude of the fondest mother—who have fearlessly striven against the wishes of my family, will leave you now suffering, almost dying—from an ill-timed motive of propriety?—No, no! the love I feel is too pure, too holy, to call forth blushes or seek concealment."

"Julie—pardon me," murmured Letorière, falling upon the steps of the tomb, "I have not told you all."

"My God! my God! he is fainting!"

"Hear me Julie,—'tis my last prayer—let me but feel your breath—your lips upon my brow."

"He'll die!—is dying!! Charles!—my Charles!!" cried the princess, in a tone of utter hopelessness, and kneeling by the side of the marquis, who had drawn his cloak so closely around him that she tried in vain to take his hand.

"I did not tell you—that I received a challenge from the baron d'Ugeon," continued Letorière, with a voice that became fainter at each word he uttered.

"A kinsman of the maréchal's!—They have murdered—basely murdered him!"

"No—I fought—this morning—with him—he acted honourably—and I received—a wound—in the breast—Julia! I wished to to see you once again.—Farewell.—The ring—you know—you will take it back.—YOUR EYE HAS INDEED FOLLOWED ME—EVEN UNTO DEATH. God pardon me! I would fain have lived—thought myself strong enough to live—till morning—Julie—again—farewell!"

Such were the dying words of the Marquis de Letorière.

FINIS.

THE

LADDER OF GOLD.

CHAPTER I.

THE PEABODY FAMILY.

It was mid-winter; and a heavy fall of snow, depositing itself in all manner of odd nooks and crannies, and leaving sundry parts of the variegated architecture standing up bare and black, was rapidly converting the housetops of a little town on the eastern coast into a chaos of unintelligible shapes and shadows. If the moon could have penetrated the haze which intercepted that heap of human habitations, it must have been considerably perplexed to pick out from the confused mass the outlines of the familiar eaves and fantastic gables of Yarlton.

Down in the narrow, zigzag streets, the snow was playing the same pantomimic tricks upon window-sills and shop projections, and up entries, and gateways, and blind alleys. Wherever there was a corner that took the wind's eye, it was blockaded by the besieging drift, which swirled upwards in fierce eddies to the chimney-pots, round which it danced and leaped like mad. Old porches, here and there, looked like sheeted sentry-boxes pitched against the back-ground of the houses. Crazy wooden lamp-posts were crowned with queer white caps, tied under the chin of the dim red light in strange ragged knots. Grotesque forms, resembling fragments of cats and baboons, were squatted on the swinging sign-boards; and the Golden Canisters, and Red Boots, and Original Hats, which advertised the marine public of Yarlton where the best articles in their several lines were to be obtained, had put on a wild sort of masquerade, like gorgons and griffins glaring upon you through a mirage.

There were that night in many great mansions blazing fires and loud revelry, all indoor comforts being wonderfully enhanced by a sense of triumph over the storm which rages outside in the window-panes, but cannot find entrance; and there were also on the bleak highways, and in the ruts on the skirts of villages, many torpid and famished wretches creeping for shelter under walls and hedges, and trying to sustain the life heat till a new day should open upon their wretchedness. But the contrast of extremes does not always touch us so keenly as the strata of mixed existence that lie between wealth and poverty, in which the struggle to keep out the wolf that howls on the threshold is a hundred times more wearing and wasting than downright pauperism, which goes straight to its refuge in the charities of the world.

Towards the extremity of the main street of Yarlton branched off a small row of houses, inhabited for the most part by the wives of sea-captains and mates of vessels, who, in the tedious intervals of grass-widowhood, while their husbands were absent on long voyages in the China seas, and other remote quarters of the globe, solaced their loneliness by letting lodgings, principally to single gentlemen. From the number of little bills on the shutters, and an occasional display of hard-bake and dusty apples, piled up pyramidically in the windows, it might be surmised that the dwellers in Trafalgar Row did not consider the humblest speculations beneath their attention. Yet, notwithstanding these signs of unobtrusive indigence, the place had a retired and genteel appearance, which might, perhaps, be ascribed to a board at the entrance exhibiting the words, "No Thoroughfare," the opposite extremity being boarded up with a notification, addressed in vain to the enterprise of the Yarltonians, that the mysterious space within was to be let for building. This circumstance, although it kept out the public traffic, was nevertheless attended by some inconvenience to the inhabitants, as the aforesaid boarding was the favorite resort of the little boys of the neighborhood, who used to take an inscrutable

delight in peeping through the chinks at the heaps and hollows of earth beyond, where some projector had dabbled in the building-lots, and for want of capital, left his foundations unfinished. With this exception, however, the only invasions to which Trafalgar Row was exposed were from wandering organ-grinders, puppet-shows, and dancing-monkeys—a class of entertainments largely patronized by the seaboard population.

In a little parlor in one of these houses, on the night when the snow had the streets all to itself, and nobody was out of doors that could help it, sat two persons at a table; a man about thirty years of age, but looking much younger, by virtue of a round, fresh-colored face, beaming with a soft and passive expression, and a woman, his junior by three or four years, but whose pale, lank features and fretful eyes gave her the appearance of being at least ten years older than her companion. This deceptive aspect of youth or age is often a matter of temperament. Some people, Heaven help us! are born old.

The considerate Muse of this true history drops a veil over the scanty supper, which lay untouched on the table between them. Nor will she make an inventory of the furniture, although it might be done with a few scratches of her pen, except that she thinks it necessary to record that there was a cradle in one corner, with an infant in it; and on the opposite side a dual-functioned piece of carpentry, which served as a settle in the day-time, and as a bed at night, supplying us at once with the etymology of that ancient article called a settle-bed. There was an open cupboard, disclosing imperfect and rather disorderly lines of cups and saucers, and other bits of ware glimmering behind them; and the walls were adorned with half-a-dozen prints of sky-blue sailors, brandishing huge cutlasses heroically in the air; a fancy sketch of "Sally in in our alley," dressed in a chip-hat with streamers, a long puce-colored sash, short petticoats, like a ballet-girl, and a bunch of flowers in her hand; a ship in full sail upon an ocean of mellow-green billows; and a portrait of Mr. Incledon, in the act of singing "The Storm," painted up to the eyes with a round blot of scarlet, that slightly infringed upon the collar of his jacket. In spite of these gay works of art, the room had a penurious and dismal aspect. There was not much fire in the grate, but luckily the grate was small and favored the diligence with which the kindly-featured man from time to time re-packed the embers to keep them together.

"It's gone ten, John," observed the woman, with a furtive glance at the table.

"Only a few minutes," replied her companion; "wait a little longer."

'Perhaps Raggles is worse to-night,' she rejoined.

'Wait a bit, and we shall hear, Nan. Lord bless us, how the wind does tear that scrap of paper, though the shutters be fastened up outside.'

'Ah! just like you. All the Peabodys are the same. As long as you can keep out the cold, and get a scramble of something to eat and drink, you'll never trouble your head about doing anything for the family.'

'What would you have me do, Mrs. Peabody?' demanded John, taking a little courage, and looking at his wife through the flame of the candle, which he was not sorry stood between them.

'Do? What every man does that has a wife and child,' replied Mrs. Peabody. 'You know we haven't had a lodger now for upwards of six weeks, except cousin Richard; and how do you think we can maintain ourselves and pay our rent out of his four shillings a-week, and the trifle you pick up at the wharf? Now, if anything should happen to Raggles, Richard will be thrown out of employ, and we'll lose that, and have to keep him most likely till he gets another berth.'

'Sufficient for the day, Nan,' returned Mr. Peabody, who was going on with that exemplary axiom, when he was cut short by the lady.

'Sufficient for the fiddlestick,' she broke in; 'I'd like to see the day when we're to have sufficient. You're an idle man, Peabody; and I'm always telling you that you're a fool, but it's no use. You get down talking to people of a morning, instead of trying to earn something; and I have to face all the worry at home to keep the house over our heads. We owe money to everybody, and it was only a week ago that I sat up all night with Mrs. Muggs' baby in the measles to keep her off me a little longer.'

'Well—well,' replied Peabody, in a soft and deprecatory tone, 'who knows but we'll have a bit of luck by and by.'

'Luck,' replied Mrs. Peabody, her thin face becoming apparently more thin and pinched than before; 'waiting for a bit of luck! A bit of luck, Peabody? What do you mean by a bit of luck?' And this latter interrogatory was uttered in a sort of scream, which bore a painful resemblance to a laugh.

The human mind, like the eye, sees all things according to the aspects they present from its own particular point of sight; and it must be frankly acknowledged that Mr. Peabody's view of the world, owing to that curious psychological fact, differed widely from his wife's, especially on this frequent topic, as to what it was he meant by a bit of luck. For Mr. Peabody was constantly expecting a bit of luck, although he never could be induced to explain what shape he

expected it was to take, or whether he was to find it in the street, or it was to fall down from the skies; while Mrs. Peabody, having been perpetually frustrated in her attempts to discover it, had arrived at a conviction that it was altogether a mental delusion. When, therefore, she put this direct question to him, which she had put, probably, a hundred times before, Mr. Peabody thought that no great good could be effected by going over the old ground, so he turned slowly to the fire, and in a thoughtful manner began to pack up the embers into the form of a cone.

Mrs. Peabody, who, we are afraid, felt at this moment a little secret scorn for what she regarded as want of sense in her husband, let the argument drop also, and uttering a long whirring sound, as much as to say, 'You're nothing but a poor weak blockhead, Peabody!' rose to her full height, and went over to the cradle where the child was buried in a profound slumber, dreaming, for all she knew, of rivers of warm milk and interminable screws of sugarstick. There was no need to disturb the child, but Mrs. Peabody was put out, and the child was an invariable resource on such occasions. Accordingly she twitched the cradle and the child awoke. Snatching it into her lap, with rather more than her usual vehemence, she set about the maternal task of drowning its whimpers in a guttural lullaby, directing an occasional glance of contempt at Mr. Peabody, who sat with his back to her, engrossed in a confused problem concerning that remote future which involved the development of all mankind's bits of luck.

This suspension of the domestic debate was disturbed by the arrival of cousin Richard, who, after shaking off a shower of flakes from his coat, and depositing on a chair a brown paper parcel, which he had carried under his arm, took his seat at the table, with a careless nod to Mrs. Peabody.

Richard was a young man of the middle height with a fine head, and a decidedly handsome cast of features, so handsome as to set you speculating at once upon the figure he would have made had he been born a gentleman, and nurtured luxuriously, and put out into the world with the advantages of fortune and station. One sometimes meets such a face amongst the children of the poor, and wonders how it came there, and how it happens that poverty does not drag down and degrade its intellectual beauty, as if Nature had no refinements of her own independently of the accidents of birth and breeding. Richard Rawlings might have been mistaken for an aristocrat had he been properly disguised; but something more than the masquerade of costume would have been necessary to enable him to sustain the character. There was an expression of premature toil and suffering in his face that too plainly betrayed the struggling class to which he belonged.

'What have you brought home in the parcel, Richard?' inquired John Peabody.

'Work—work,' replied Richard.

'Raggles is worse to-night,' observed Mrs. Peabody, in a half question.

'As bad as he can be,' said Richard.

'It will be a sad job for you if anything happens to him,' she continued.

'I suppose I must look out elsewhere,' returned Richard.

'Never despair, man,' said John Peabody, who was just going to add something about the possibility of a bit of luck, when the utterance of that consoling observation was checked by a sinister glance from his wife.

'But Mrs. Raggles will keep on the business,' said Mrs. Peabody.

'Not likely,' said Richard; 'what does she know about it? He did it all himself. Mrs. Raggles! She does nothing from morning till night but talk to her cat. Another bit of herring, Nan.'

'Hand down that bottle behind you, John,' said Mrs. Peabody. 'There's just a drop left for Richard. She's a vain poor body, for all I hear of her. But it will be a great pull down to her pride if he should go off. They say she has some rich relations.'

'They *say* so,' returned Richard, with a cynical leer, which seemed to imply that he doubted the fact.

'Did you ever see any of them?' inquired John.

'Never,' said Richard, 'and tho only one I ever heard spoken of was an uncle, who went into the coal trade, and settled in France. They have no relations either of them, and live like hens in a coop.'

'But isn't she mighty tawdry and fond of finery?' said Mrs. Peabody.

'When she can get it,' replied Richard; 'but Raggles is too close to indulge her.'

'Well, never despair, I say,' remarked John, 'who knows but——'

'Now, then, for it, John,' interrupted Mrs. Peabody, 'now for the bit of luck.'

'You're wrong, my dear,' responded John; 'I assure you, on my word, no—I never thought of such a thing; I was only going to say, that should Raggles die she might keep Richard to manage the business.'

Richard smiled, not very pleasantly, at this observation.

'Now, Dick,' said John Peabody, who, in a fine spirit of hopefulness, was always for reconciling everybody and everything, 'isn't that rather a little prejudice? You know well enough that she can't do without you. Why, it stands to reason after seven years.'

'Ay, seven years next January,' returned

Richard; 'seven years. And I believe I've been pretty hard at it all that time?'

'That you have,' observed Mrs. Peabody; 'and the least old Raggles ought to do, would be to leave you something in his will.'

'Old Raggles make a will!' observed Richard, smiling more unpleasantly than before.' 'he'd as soon set fire to his house. He would think that he was giving away all he had in the world on the spot. Seven years!' he continued musingly, and taking up a thin wavy poker that stood beside the grate, he thrust its attenuated point into the coals, and at a single dash swept down the conical fabric which had been built up so carefully by John Peabody.

'At the end of seven years,' resumed Richard, after a short silence: 'a man ought to have saved something to set him up in the world. But unless I was a conjurer I couldn't have saved in Raggles' service. He's so jealous of the business, that a man might be with him all his life, without learning enough of it to begin on his own account. He doesn't give one a chance. He suspects everybody—trusts nobody—the best of all ways to turn an honest man into a rogue!' Here he stopped for a moment, and gulped down a mouthful of the mixture of shrub and water Mrs. Peabody had prepared for him, and then went on; 'he keeps his own books, and would never let anybody see them. It's astonishing, isn't it?'

'Very,' said Mrs. Peabody, not exactly clear about the matter, although she thought that it must be astonishing.

'Never,' said Richard, the unpleasant smile expanding into a sudden laugh; 'never saw a line of his books; never allowed to talk to the customers, lest I'd run away with them, I suppose, and set up for myself. Think of that, John Peabody, think of that.'

'Well, I do think of it,' said John; 'and all things considered, isn't it likely now, Dick, that that's only his way. He's an old-fashioned sort of a man, you know, and has been used to his own way; and you must take people as you find them.'

'That's uncommon wise of you,' observed Mrs. Peabody; 'see what has come to you of taking people as you find them. Bless the goose, he has been taking people as he finds them all his life, and I'd like to know how he finds himself after it. I believe there's two shillings in the house. I needn't say any more on that subject, I suppose, John Peabody?'

'Well, but my dear,' John ventured to remark, 'you can't change the nature of people. Here's old Raggles has a particular habit, my dear—a particular habit; we all have our particular habits; and I was only saying to Dick that in that case, it was a pity to take it to himself, that's all,' and he ended with a formidable wink aside to his wife, by way of conveying to her privately his benevolent desire to smooth over the uncomfortable feeling Richard had about Raggles. But Mrs. Peabody was not at all disposed to take this conciliatory view of the matter; and did not hesitate to express her disdain for what she called the 'mean-spirited' ideas of her husband.

'Don't wink at me, Peabody!' she exclaimed; 'I'll not encourage you in your mean-spirited ideas. Particular habits, indeed! Do you want to make Richard as big a fool as you are yourself? Lord, that poor man never could bring himself to suspect anybody of anything. Nothing makes an impression on him, I do believe. He's the right sort of man to go through the world, and bring up a family.'

'Very well,' Mrs. Peabody, 'very well,' quietly returned John; 'only I don't see the good of suspecting people, but I dare say you're right, my dear.'

Mrs. Peabody had some strong opinions on the subject of fools, and maintained that it was better for a woman to be married to the worst of knaves than the most accommodating of fools. And of all fools she considered her husband the greatest, as she told him ten times a-day; and it must be owned that he justified the appellation in some measure by never taking any pains to convince her that he was a man of sense. It by no means follows, however, that he was a fool. The wisest man might have borne the epithet in like circumstances with a like submission rather than raise a dispute which could end only by making both parties more obstinate than when they set out. At all events, the reader is requested to give John Peabody the benefit of the doubt, as in the course of this history, he may be placed in situations in which he may not exercise this transcendent virtue of forbearance.

The conversation now turned off on Mrs. Raggles, and it was clear from what Richard said about her that there was no great good will between them, and that he had as poor an opinion of her as Mrs. Peabody had of John. If similitudes of character produce happiest marriages, Mrs. Raggles ought to have been married to John Peabody, as it appeared that she was much the same sort of easy-going, good-for-nothing person, and Mrs. Peabody was malicious enough to observe that it was a pity they were not man and wife, as they would be sure to do well together.

How she and Raggles had gone on together suggested another topic, which naturally led to the consideration of how she would get on by herself if Raggles were to die, an event Richard looked upon as inevitable, Pogey, the apothecary, having given

him up, unless he should take a favorable turn in the course of the night.

'And if he should die,' inquired Mrs. Peabody, 'what do you think you will do, Richard?'

'Oh!' said Richard, 'the best I can, to be sure; 'let's talk no more about it; I've got some work to do before I go to sleep, and I'm quite fagged out. Can you give me a morsel of candle?'

'You may take that,' returned Mrs. Peabody; 'we've light enough by the fire.'

Richard took the candle, and picking up his brown paper parcel, wished them good night. They listened for a moment as his heavy step went up the stairs, till they heard him enter his room, and lock the door after him.

'He's out of sorts to-night,' observed Mrs. Peabody.

John Peabody answered with a yawn, stretching himself out in a fearful manner half over the floor. But the connubial conversation did not end here, and for more than a quarter of an hour afterwards any passer-by might have heard the nasal tones of that thin voice issuing from the settle, responded to at broken intervals by a sonorous snore.

CHAPTER II.

RICHARD RAWLINGS.

When Richard Rawlings had got into his room and locked his door, a precaution which Mrs. Peabody had never known him to adopt before, he set down the candle and the parcel upon a little round table, and throwing himself into a seat, fixed his eyes in a hard stare upon the candlestick. For full five minutes he continued to stare in this entranced way, without any variety or intermission, except when his eyes moved up and down the candle, as if he were taking its dimensions; but although he looked at it with such apparent steadfastness it never entered into his thoughts. During that five minutes he ran over the whole history of his life.

He went back to his childhood, which called up a picture of a hovel sprawling amongst muddy outworks of sties and duck-ponds, in a clayey hollow on the brink of a stream fringed with alder-trees, with a ragged orchard at the back, choked up by brambles and long grass almost as tall as himself. He recollected a bridge which abutted close to the hovel on the high road above, and a track leading up to it, upon which he had clambered many a time, crowing and clapping his hands to notify his mother, who fondly watched him from below, that he had achieved the perilous summit.

And then the scene changed, and all was gloom and silence in the hovel. A miserable light, fixed in a sconce on the wall, showed the emaciated face of a sick woman lying on a pallet; and then followed mourning and wailing, and he was sent out of the way while the tender mother, whose voice still vibrated at his heart, was carried to the grave.

Then came another slide of the dark lantern, the straggling street of a far-off village, and a hard-featured man, toiling from morning till night, and taking the boy, now growing up to a premature consciousness of daily necessities, into the fields, to help him in his work. This morose man is his father, very harsh at most times, but now and then speaking kind words to him that make the tears tremble in his eyes. The holidays of childhood are all over—the toddling up steeps, and hunting of butterflies, and the terrible hazards through ditches and stiles, and swinging gates; and the boy, with his instincts yet yearning towards play and pastime, is compelled to labor like a dreary man for his daily food. And mixed with these memories are glimpses of a school where he pores over books and slates, and somehow learns to read and write and cast up rows of figures which he never can keep in a straight line, or shape into equal proportions, some being of gigantic height, and some dwarfed and crippled, and which, in spite of all his pains, he cannot prevent from running into and tumbling over each other.

Then ensues the dismallest change of all. The hard man is crushed down by poverty and over-work, and the boy is alone in the bleak churchyard. The world is out there in the sunshine on the roads, and in the meadows, and on the hills; and crowds of human faces pass and re-pass, but not one is turned towards him; and he wanders up and down, begging for food, and ready for any drudgery that can procure it. He hardly knows how he lives from day to day, but he contrives to live through many years that, looking back upon them at this distance of time, seem like a mist of centuries. The terrible images that rise up in that mist!—the appalling fight for life!—he shudders even now while he thinks of them.

And so he works on to manhood, his sympathies for his kind, if any can be healthily nurtured in such circumstances, perpetually beaten down, until his whole faculties become concentrated upon the one object of self-preservation. Perhaps the process has hardened his nature, as it has embittered his life; but he has no spare time for moral reflections. He is engrossed by a more urgent matter—the prospect of being again cast upon the world to starve. It is of that he is thinking—of that alone; and it is filled with

horrors, rapidly shaped and huddled together out of the experiences of the past.

He recalls every item of his seven years' servitude in the shop of Mr. Raggles; how he was first taken in upon charity, and put to the lowest offices, which he was then glad enough to discharge; how his honesty was suspected in the beginning, and how he was buffetted and ill-used; how Raggles brought home a young wife, who, conceiving an aversion to him, never let an opportunity slip of poisoning his master's mind against him by trumpery complaints. A thousand incidents that had happened during this period came back upon him, darkly tinged by a sense of wrongs and contumely. He remembered all the petty vexations acutely—they had eaten into his soul: the benefits he had enjoyed were buried under a heap of injuries; and now, in the end, his situation hung upon a thread, and Raggles was, perhaps, on the point of inflicting upon him the greatest wrong of all, by dying, and throwing him out of employment.

Slowly emerging from his meditations, he drew his chair over to the table, and taking up the paper parcel, began to untie the cord. A flush passed over his face, and his hand slightly trembled. What were his thoughts at that moment? He was working himself into a belief that Raggles had been his enemy all throughout. Why should Raggles not have trusted him in his business, and suffered him to make a character by which he could live hereafter? But Raggles had kept him down, and thrust him out of sight. He was known only as a poor, baited underling, whom nobody thought of throwing away a word upon. An insight into Raggles' connections would furnish him with the means of getting employment when he wanted it; and had Raggles acted justly, there would be no occasion now for him to obtain such necessary information by underhand means. It might be useful to him in various ways to learn something about Raggles' affairs; there might be matters he could take up on his own account; or he might gather some hints that would be valuable to other people, which he could turn to profit. There was, besides, an additional reason for possessing himself of the real state of Raggles' concerns—namely, Mrs. Raggles' total ignorance of them. Should Raggles go off suddenly, what could the poor woman do, if there was not somebody at hand to act for her? nor did it escape his friendly regard for her interests that a preliminary knowledge of Raggles' financial resources would enable him to act for her in a manner which would place her at a considerable disadvantage. There was a long arrear of small, grinding annoyances due to him.

Having got rid of his conscientious scruples on these points in half the time it has taken to recapitulate them, he tore open the parcel and drew therefrom the ledgers and bank-book of Mr. Raggles, which that prudent tradesman had been in the habit of keeping in his desk under the protection of a patent safety lock. But in times of illness, when households become disordered, keys get straying about into wrong hands, and so it happened that these records of the house of Raggles came into Richard's possession that very morning. When the idea first flashed upon his mind of taking home these books and sifting their contents, he felt very giddy and sick; but it need not be related by what insidious degrees, as the day wore on, the morbid feelings which were consuming his heart overcame his honest compunctions. The only thing he could not quite reconcile himself to was the secrecy of the act. Secrecy had an ugly air of guilt about it. But then he balanced all the other arguments so skilfully, *pro* and *con.* that he was able at last to set aside even that. There is never any lack of successful sophistry on such occasions.

It was probably pure accident which attracted his attention in the first instance to the bank-book; and great was his surprise at the discoveries he made in that instructive volume But the discovery that chiefly excited his curiosity was the unexpected extent of Raggles' transactions, for scarcely a day passed that an entry did not appear on one side or the other. The quantity of money in perpetual movement through these little red columns fairly dazzled him. He had always thought that Raggles carried on a thriving business, but he had no suspicion that it involved such large sums and such frequent payments; and the more he reflected upon their magnitude, the more enormous, by force of contrast, seemed the penurious tyranny with which he had been treated. In short, he could not help regarding Raggles' pecuniary successes as a special refinement of cruelty, which aggravated his own misfortunes; so that when he came to add up the columns and strike the balance, he was in a proper mood to appreciate at its full value the sum of 845*l.* 14*s.*, which he found Mr. Raggles had lying idle in the bank.

The next book, a long, narrow volume, bound in white vellum, inscribed in Raggles' own hand 'Bills and Securities," was not so intelligible to him as the simpler cash-account he had just explored. Here several lines were obliterated by a dash of the pen, and others were written in a sort of a shorthand, interspersed with figures and capital letters, of which he could make neither head nor tail. These obliterations and hieroglyphics only exaggerated the opinion he had

formed of the vastness of the dealings in which Raggles was engaged. It was clear that he had other ways of turning money besides that general-shop in the market-place, which he now began to look upon almost as a blind. If his affairs were legitimate and above-board, why should he record them in symbolical devices which nobody could interpret but himself? Securities too? There was a policy of insurance, plain enough, for he could distinctly trace the name of the Universal Fire Assurance office, (of which he took a note,) a bond marked B B 31, and a sum of 76*l.* crossed out opposite to the Yarlton Loan Fund. What could all this mean? Did Raggles lend out money on interest? He carefully jotted down all these suspicious items upon the sheet of paper which was lying beside him, and which was beginning to look very like the heads of a bill of indictment.

There were two other books, the regular ledgers. Here all the items were perfectly clear, and they distinctly unveiled the course of the shop trade carried on by Mr. Raggles. This was the precise information he had originally looked for; but his researches had developed a wider range of secrets, and upon a re-examination of his elaborate notes, he found that they were even more various and important than they had seemed at first sight. Richard Rawlings pondered long upon the facts he was thus enabled to collect by dint of profound conjectural criticism. Sometimes, in the midst of his meditations, it would suddenly occur to him that the man whose private affairs he was thus scrutinizing was perhaps wrestling, at that very moment, in the last agony for another gasp of life, oblivious of worldly business, all his bills and securities, insurances and loans, dropping into dust and ashes before his failing senses; and there would come an uncomfortable feeling about a death-bed, and a vision of wan hands thrust out from under the clothes, and figures kneeling about with their heads bowed in prayer; but the memory of the slights and wrongs of years dispelled the suggestions of his better nature, and turned them to bitterness.

The proofs were before him of the wealth that man had amassed during those seven years in which he had heaped such oppression upon him who now sat in judgment on their relative positions. Had Raggles been a poor man, or a struggling man, it would have palliated his harshness and meanness. But Raggles was rich, and *he* was a beggar. Richard Rawlings had a case to make out for his own justification; and in proportion as he succeeded in satisfying himself of the inordinate wealth of Raggles, the hardships, and consequent injustice, that he had suffered rose up more and more palpably before him.

A third person, dispassionately looking on, might not have been able to detect the force of the reasoning by which he converted Raggles' prosperity into a personal wrong done to himself; but the subtilty that enters into resentments built upon minute points and hoarded trifles, is not easily penetrated by ordinary observers, and is scarcely intelligible to people of large and comprehensive views. There are individuals, not a very numerous class it is to be hoped, who have an extraordinary power, when it serves the occasion, of calling up, out of a life-time of kindly intercourse, a miraculous collection of small slights and offences, utterly forgotten by everybody else, if they ever had a real existence, and getting up out of them a plausible catalogue of grievances, which they make it appear they had borne with exemplary patience. In instances of this nature, however, it generally happens that the grievances are never disclosed till some fortunate opportunity arrives when they can be made use of advantageously, the meek virtue upon which they had been inflicted continuing to bear them with a smiling resignation up to the moment it can turn them to a profitable purpose. It must not be supposed that Richard Rawlings was an individual of this low and pettyfogging cast, for his genius embraced a more expanded horizon; but there was thus far a coincidence between him and such persons, that in his ordinary behavior to Mr. and Mrs. Raggles he never betrayed his sense of the injuries that were seething in his mind, and that the said injuries never boiled over till he believed Raggles' and his own situation to be on the point of dissolution together.

Fine encouragement this for honesty, thought Richard. The employer grows rich upon the hard servitude of your youth, and leaves you in your manhood a beggar! The man of substance dies, and is followed by a train of crape and feathers to the churchyard, and I go out to starve. And people take off their hats and pray as the body of the rich man passes? How comes it that he, who was no better than myself, poorer in heart and spirit, grasping, mean and cruel, should have that white stone over his grave with a pious verse upon it to inform the world that he is sleeping in heaven, while I am prowling on the highroad for bread? What was this man's advantage over me? Wealth. It is the ladder by which men ascend to power over their fellow men. Why should not I, too, plant my foot upon it, and climb as well as others?

A new light broke upon him. The project of a life had leapt into his brain.

A little skeleton clock on the stair-head outside his door struck two. The morsel of candle supplied to him by Mrs. Peabody

would have left him in the dark long before, had he not had the forethought to provide himself with another on his way home. This second candle was descending slowly into the socket, and beginning to make odd smoky gyrations which curled upwards from the huge unsnuffed wick, when Richard thought it was high time to go to bed. At that instant, while the sinking flame was glimmering and shooting out red sparks on the table, there came a loud and violent knocking at the street-door. It seared him out of his reverie. Had there been light enough in the room to show his face, a rush of blood might have been seen mantling up to the roots of his hair, then suddenly retreating and leaving the marble surface as white as paper.

The first thought that occurred to him was that Raggles had called for his books, and that suspicion of having made away with them had, of course, fallen upon him. He had nerve enough to brave the consequences, if that were all; but shame was paramount to terror. There was still that grace of unsullied youth in him, for it was his first delinquency, and he would gladly have foregone all hopes and resentments to have recalled it. But it was too late. What was to be done? How could he secrete these fatal books? The last floating particle of the candle had already melted down, and the room was pitch-dark, except in that lessening spot upon the table, where the pulsing flame, which threatened to go out at each palpitation, revealed glimpses of the evidence against him. He ran to the window to see who was at the door, forgetting, in his confusion, that his room was at the back of the house, and that the window looked out upon a little yard jammed up against the heavy wall of a brewery. The knocking was repeated, and, hardly daring to breathe, he stood at the table, unknowingly clutching up the ledgers, and waiting for the issue.

'Who's that at the door?' inquired a shrill voice below.

Richard Rawlings listened with intense attention, but could not catch the answer.

'From Mrs. Raggles?' returned the same voice.

The answer was again indistinct, and the knocking was repeated.

'This is a fine time o'night to waken people out of their sleep, isn't it?' resumed the shrill voice. 'What do you want?'

There was now a loud shout, as if the person outside was determined to make the response unmistakeably distinct; and Richard fancied that it sounded like his own name. He sprang to the door to assure himself that it was locked.

'What? You want Richard Rawlings? Well, I'm sure, you might have stopped till daylight; wait a bit, and I'll let you in,' said Mrs. Peabody, muttering at the same time a variety of objurgations natural to the occasion.

In a few minutes more the street-door was opened, and Richard caught fragments of the conversation that ensued in the hall.

'U-u-ugh!' screamed Mrs. Peabody, as a hurricane of sleet drifted in; 'come in—quick,' and the door was instantly shut again with a loud clap. 'Well—what's the matter? U-uch! don't come near me; lord save us, you're like a snow-ball.'

'Y-i-s, m-a-r-m,' replied a shivering voice, which articulated its words letter by letter, 'I'm so cold—m-a-r-m—titre—titre—if—you please.'

'Don't stand titering there,' said Mrs. Peabody; 'what's your message?'

'If—you—please—m-a-r-m,' resumed the creaking voice, and then there was a terrible shudder of the body of the speaker, which seemed to run up the stairs, and freeze the whole house; 'if—you—please—m-a-r-m, master's taken in the fit-tis-isses, and mis-sus sent me, if you please m-a-r-m, for mis-is-ter Rawling-s-isses.'

'In the fittisses?' returned Mrs. Peabody; 'then, I suppose, it's all over with him.'

'I suppose it is, m-a-r-m,' replied the voice, in a leisurely tremble, having discharged its business, and thinking it might now take its time to recover itself.'

'John Peabody,' cried out the good woman, 'do you hear? Raggles is taken in the fittisses.'

John Peabody responded in an audible snore.

'Ah! just like you,' resumed Mrs. Peabody; 'all the Peabodys is the same. Sleep, eat, and drink for ever, and the world going to pieces about you. Get up, I tell you—and e-a a-l-l R-i-ch-a-r-d!' which last words being projected into his ear with a prolonged bellow, like the screech of a steam-engine, stunned him out of his sleep, and he started up in the bed like a man demented. But after rubbing his eyes, and comforting himself with a hearty shake, his meek and acquiescent disposition speedily adapted itself to the exigencies of the moment, as it was habituated to do, and he moved gently out of the bed, and softly across the floor, and up the stairs without uttering a word till he groped his way to Richard's door.

'Richard!' whispered John Peabody at the key-hole, as if he was afraid of disturbing him. 'Richard!'

No reply, but a long surging sound of a heavy sleep.

'Richard,' repeated John Peabody, accompanying the summons this time with a low tap at the door.

'Call louder, you fool!' exclaimed Mrs. Peabody, 'or he'll never hear you.'

'Richard!' repeated John Peabody, in a bolder tone, knocking again rather more loudly.

There was a deep yawn within, followed by a gurgle of dreamy words.

'What's the matter!' demanded Richard.

'You're wanted,' replied John Peabody, cringing close up to the door, and shuddering from the cold in a manner that made the entire panel shake.

'Who is it?' inquired Richard.

'It's Crikey Snaggs,' cried John Peabody.

'Oh! Crikey Snaggs is it?' said Richard; 'just tell him to step up to the door, will you?'

'Step up this way, Crikey,' said John, 'and mind you don't fall over the bucket;' and John descended timorously, and, making his way as quietly as he could into bed again, covered himself up in the clothes.

'Well, Crikey,' cried Richard, in rather an authoritative tone of voice, keeping his hand clenched on the key of the door all the time; 'what brings you here at such an hour of the night?"

'If you please, sir,' replied Crikey, 'Master's taken in the fittisses, and Missus says you're to come up, if you please, sir.

'Is that all?' demanded Richard.

'As I knows of,' returned Crikey.

'Anybody there?' inquired the other.

'Except the widder, if you please, sir, and Joey, I don't think so,' replied Crikey Snaggs.

'Then wait a minute, till I dress myself, and I'll come with you,' said Richard, turning to the table, and, gathering up the books into the brown paper, he thrust them under the bed, and then opening the door, which he carefully locked after him, and desiring Crikey to go before him, noiselessly stept down the stairs into the street. He was in no disposition to talk to Mrs. Peabody, whose muffled voice he could overhear in voluble discourse with her husband, who was probably by this time fast asleep again.

Crikey Snaggs was a little boy of fifteen years of age, but being singularly contracted in size, looked like a stunted child of not more than ten or eleven. His real name was Bob, but everybody called him Crikey, a nickname that had been given to him on account of an awkward curve in his ribs which threw his head slightly out of the perpendicular. The *soubriquet* of Crikey was supposed to represent the general idea of crooked, and the boy was so used to it, and it came so natural to him at last, that if any one called him Bob he would never think of answering. Little Crikey had a very large head, with bleary eyes, and thin lips. He had been taken from the Foundling Hospital, and had not the most remote suspicion to whom he belonged, and didn't care. His actual amount of intelligence was strictly limited to doing literally what he was told to do, if he understood it. Beyond that, he ate and drank what he could get in Raggles' establishment, where he was housed and fed; and was remarkable for no other peculiarity but an invincible tendency to sleep, which overtook him whenever he was left to himself for three consecutive minutes.

When they reached the house in the market-place, the door was opened by a woman-servant already alluded to under the name of Joey, a heavy girl, with a great cap on the top of her head, and an extraordinary profusion of dusty hair clumped up under it, a round face shining all over with soap and good-nature, and a pair of jibing, pale-bluish eyes, in which the light seemed to be always glistening and vanishing, and which made her look irresistibly comical through the thick tears that were raining down her cheeks.

At sight of Richard, Joey's grief burst out afresh, and it was with difficulty he could restrain her from having a regular cry in the passage.

'Don't be foolish, woman,' said Richard, 'how is he going on?'

'Very bad," bubbled out Joey, with a most festive expression of countenance.

'Is he sensible?' he inquired.

'He talks miraculous,' said Joey, 'and such a heap of things comes into his head that the like of it was never heerd.'

'Why did they send for me?' demanded Richard.

'Don't you know?' she returned; 'he has been raving about you, and calling for you this hour back, and I shouldn't wonder,' she added, in a dismal whisper, 'if he had something very pettikler to say to you.'

CHAPTER III.

CONTAINING SOME BIOGRAPHICAL PARTICULARS CONCERNING THE RAGGLES, WHICH THE READER MAY SKIP IF HE PLEASES.

The fishing-town of Yarlton, situated in the hundred of Cutsford, lies high up on the coast, not many miles distant from the Border. It was formerly variously designated Yulton, Yarltoft, and Yarltown, finally softening into Yarlton. A fort is said to have once commanded the place from a high cliff on the northern side; but, as the fort has long since disappeared, and the cliff along with it, posterity is at liberty to exercise its own discretion over the tradition.—Like many other very old towns contiguous to the sea, there are some queer hollows and mounds still extant in the neighboring flats, which are indifferently attributed to the Druids, the Romans, the Saxons, the Dutch, and the Normans; and, should the Archæo-

logical Society ever be induced to hold an anniversary in Yarlton, they will find their hands full of historical conundrums, upon which their learned researches may be advantageously bestowed.

At the time we are speaking of, Yarlton had fifteen hundred and odd inhabitants, a little dumpy Gothic church, a sedate chapel of ease, several independent places of worship, and a free school, besides an almshouse, and an assembly-room over the market-house or town-hall. It was what may be called a bustling, but not a lively, place; for, although the streets were generally pretty full of stray sailors, and chapmen, and motley amphibious pedestrians, who were in constant movement up and down, yet the town had a dull, idle aspect notwithstanding. The people seemed to walk about without any precise object; they lolled, and loitered, and whistled, and looked into shop-windows, and hung about the stalls, as if they had nothing on earth to do, and were waiting for something, rather wishing that it might not arrive. The only real enthusiasm that ever awoke Yarlton out of this deep lethargy was when the fishermen made a great haul, and returned in the crisp sunshine of the dawn with their flotilla sparkling over the waters. Then everybody was up and astir, and there was a universal rush to the beach, and the town poured out its whole fifteen hundred and odd inhabitants to witness the dragging of the nets and the display of the spoils. The sea-serpent caught and brought home alive, and stretched out on the sands, could not have thrown the population into a condition of greater excitement.

The market-place of Yarlton was the focus of all the traffic and all the idleness.—Here there were tilted-waggons, and country carts, and trucks resembling sledges, and occasional post-chaises, and wheel-barrows piled up, according to the season, with geraniums, vegetables, crockery ware, kettles, saucepans, brushes, rugs, mats, and the like, to be seen in perpetual motion, or spread out over the ground on market-days, after the manner of a bazaar in the open air. Here also were the two great inns of Yarlton, exactly *vis-a-vis*, and keeping a vigilant watch upon each other: the Grundy Arms, which was considered the genteelest, and more modern of the two, being called, moreover, after Squire Grundy of Grundy Hall, who presided at the inauguration dinner, and having a portico in front that advanced some ten feet into the street, and was covered at the top with a forest of myrtles, firs, and aloes; and the Drake's Head (not the bird, but the Admiral,) a very old, lengthy house, with a sloping tiled roof, small casement windows, a tottering wooden porch, which seemed to be held up, and kept together, by a thick group of monthly roses that wandered out into the air overhead, and wooden benches in front, upon which, at all hours, somebody was sure to be sitting. Here, too, were the best shops in the town, the only shops, statistically speaking, that rendered it worth the while of the Custom House to send up to London a monthly voucher of the imports and exports of Yarlton.

In the good old war time, under the patriotic auspices of Billy Pitt, as he was familiarly designated by the people at large, Yarlton was a prosperous place for its size and opportunities. Amongst the most opulent of its inhabitants was Ebenezer Raggles, a man of patient industry and high moral character. His moral character was his *cheval de bataille*. He started in life with it, and found it so useful to him that no temptations could induce him to risk it.—To say that a man starts in life with a character of any kind may, perhaps, appear paradoxical: but in this case it was perfectly true, for Ebenezer was a member of the highly respected sect called Methodists, and began the world with all the credit in advance which the world is disposed to give to strictly pious people. The Methodists were in high vogue in the commercial line at that time, and Ebenezer, by the severity of his manner and assiduous attention to business, became, in the course of a few years, a prominent person, in a town where prominent persons were looked up to with a feeling of reverence almost amounting to awe.

There was another circumstance very much in his favor. As a matter of religious profession he was opposed to wars; as a matter of business he was obliged to support them. The Christian protested against the iniquity of bloodshed; the tradesman was compelled to live by it. So that while, on the one hand, he mourned over the sinfulness of turning men out of the paths of godliness into soldiers and sailors, on the other, he dealt in all kinds of general stores for exportation for the use of the troops abroad, and for the victualling and clothing of the navy. This was felt by the Yarltonians to be a great hardship, and he was looked upon as a man who was making a daily sacrifice on a tender point of conscience, from the purest patriotic motives; and his popularity increased accordingly.

And thus Ebenezer Raggles carried on a handsome trade as long as the wars lasted, and gradually absorbed whatever windfalls chanced to drop in the way of contracts and general speculations. He became local agent for the Universal Fire Assurance Company, by which, although he did not net

much profit, he improved his influence, and, amongst other undertakings, allowed himself to be nominated as a director of the Yarlton Loan Fund, which returned twenty per cent. per annum upon the original capital.

Yet, prosperous as he was, Ebenezer had his private troubles. Wherever there is much sunshine in the crowded haunts of life, there must be some shadow. Every day has its night, every weal has its woe, is a legacy from the old proverbial philosophy which is found in every house; there is a sorrow of some sort lying hidden in the happiest places. Ebenezer had his in the person of an only son.

When only sons do not turn out to be the joy of their fathers' lives, they usually turn out to be their plagues. There is little choice between the opposite poles in that wide region of self-will and impunity which the only son is so often allowed to career over by blind affection and erring forbearance; Ebenezer, who was a shrewd and rigorous man to all the rest of the world, was strangely indulgent to his only son; and Tom Raggles in due time kicked the traces, and broke clear away from the parental control.

Tom first showed signs of his independence at school. He had grown up in the notion that his father was the richest man in Yarlton, and in accordance with this impression he topped all his schoolfellows in the boldness of his exploits. Of course he had, or pocketed, whatever money he wanted, and, armed with this power, he did what he liked; and, greatly to his father's scandal, his first outbreak took an heroic direction. He was particularly fond of building fortifications of clay and bricks and oyster-shells, in the playground, and blowing them up with trains of gunpowder. The battle mania had seized upon the schools, like a raging epidemic, and Tom Raggles was the generalissimo of the quiet commercial academy where his father had placed him, in a vague hope of discipline and double entry. He would draw out the boys in regular battalia, and providing them, at his own expense, with tin guns, excellent for discharges of pebbles and gravel, it was his delight to dispose them in hostile lines, abundantly provided in the centres and at the extremities with heaps of ammunition, and to hallo them into an engagement; and when, in the fury of their martial ardor, they came to close quarters, it was a strict regulation that each man should throw away his gun, and draw out a wooden sword, with which he was to fall upon the heads of the enemy. In the course of these campaigns, many boys lost an eye, or had a cheek cut open, or had a tooth knocked out, while some were carried away triumphantly on litters to their beds of glory. This sort of thing could not be expected to last very long. The whole neighborhood complained of it. Occasional stones and showers of pebbles found their way over the walls, and carried the war into the neutral hats, and bonnets, and baskets of the peaceful pedestrians outside; and the fireworks and explosions created as much dismay as if the French had landed in full force upon the coast. This could not last; and, after many remonstrances, and many interviews with Mr. Raggles, senior, and many negotiations between the father and son, and many other stratagems to induce the young gentleman to return to the paths of citizenship, all of which were ineffectual, Mr. Hummums, the principal of the commercial academy, felt himself reluctantly obliged, with a load of thanks and apologies, to send Master Raggles home.

The effect of this measure was only to transfer the military activity of Tom Raggles from the play-ground to the shop.—Tom was no sooner re-established at home than he commenced operations behind the counter, converted his papa's elevated skeleton desk at the top of the steps into a battery, upon which he planted two pieces of artillery, ingeniously inserted crackers in rolls of cloth and other articles, which were sure to explode the moment they were touched, and filled every convenient little hole in the stools with gunpowder, having a match always ready to fire them when anybody was about to sit down, which he called "taking the enemy by surprise."—The infinite variety of his tactics successfully defeated the vigilance of his father, who was taken by surprise, in common with the enemy, every hour in the day; so that there was nothing left for it but to send him back again to school to get him out of the way.

He was now placed under the charge of Mr. Fogleton, a serious man, of inflexible domestic habits, who always drest in black, and wore excruciatingly tight white neckcloths. But in less than a week Tom had so completely subverted the discipline of the academy, that Mr. Fogleton was compelled to adopt the distressing alternative of relinquishing the thirty-five pounds a-year with extras, which he was to have received for that young gentleman's tuition. He therefore sent him back to his papa, but in a more formal manner, as might be anticipated from his constitutional gravity, than had been adopted by Hummums. He made Tom, as a measure of wholesome reproval, the bearer of a long letter to his father full of moral reflections on the general tenor of his character and conduct; which letter it

is not necessary to trouble the reader with, as Tom tore it up into a great many small fragments, which he distributed along the high road for the edification of the public, before he reached home.

In this way the education of Tom Raggles was conducted for several years. His progress much resembled that of the ingenious piece of mechanism which, by the action of invisible wheels, makes two steps backward for every one it goes forward, so that, in due time, instead of reaching the end of its journey, it is further off from it than when it started. When Tom had finished his schooling, he was a proficient in all the scampish accomplishments of his day, and had made scarcely any perceptible advance in practical or useful acquisitions, beyond the common rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Emancipated from the surveillance of the school-room, he made his *debut* in public life with unbounded applause. Tom Raggles was a buck of the first water. Despising the sleek costume of the sect to which he nominally belonged, Tom made a brilliant appearance in yellow pantaloons and Hessian boots, a bright blue coat, and an embroidered waistcoat. He rode races, drank, gambled, and, as became a lad of spirit, boasted of his intrigues. The cock-pit and the ring had the honor of including him amongst their most constant frequenters; he bred dogs, and shot without a license; committed gallant trespasses upon preserves and farm-yards; and took so keen a delight in all sorts of contraband pleasures and illicit sports, that a considerable portion of his time was consumed in defending himself against charges of assault and battery, in buying off witnesses, compromising depredations, and keeping out of the way of warrants.

Ebenezer looked on with passive dismay at the course upon which his son had launched himself. He was getting very old and very feeble, and the power he had suffered to pass out of his hands when Tom was a boy, could never be recalled now that Tom was a mannikin. A curious transposition of their relations towards each other grew insensibly out of these circumstances: Ebenezer dwindled into a child, and Tom became master of the house, and of everything that was in it. Remembering what Ebenezer had been in his stalwart days,—that close, compact, sagacious man of business,—it was as good as a homily to hear Tom checking his drivelling exuberance, and turning his superannuated notions of life inside out. The elasticity of youth carried it hollow against the stale experiences of age. It was wiser, and braver, and more up to the mark; looked with contempt upon the old safeguards and defences, which it sneered at as mere superstitions and prejudices; and insisted upon it that the world had made a start, which left all such antiquated doctrines at an immeasurable distance behind. What was it but rank nonsense to talk about the tortoise beating the hare? Thus new generations rise and trample down their predecessors who laid the foundations for them; and thus it has happened from the beginning, and will happen again and again to the crack of doom.

Ebenezer drivelled on a few years longer, and then dropped into the grave, and Tom had the business all to himself.

A sudden, but not at all an extraordinary, change passed over his character. It was the easiest transition in the world for Tom to rush from one extreme to another. As we find in the natural history of insects, that the grub turns into a butterfly, so it often occurs in the natural history of man, that the butterfly turns into a grub. Whether the love of pleasure had exhausted the kernel of enjoyment, and left nothing to batten upon but the shell; or whether, being in itself purely sensuous, it only took another shape of selfishness, it is needless to inquire, for we are interested only in the fact that after having squandered his health, and a great deal of his father's money 'in a youth of frolics,' Tom Raggles settled down into a middle age of thrift and avariee.—Having thrown away all the money he could get from his father, he devoted the rest of his life to saving all the money he could make for himself.

Let nobody be shocked by this violent re-action. It takes place every day, although it is not always visible on the surface. Men harden as they get older: the frost of time steals on and nips their sympathies; and when they begin to acquire wealth, they begin to discern the folly of generosity, and the wisdom of cultivating that laudable prudence which displaces the eager liberality of youth. See how friendships politely bow friendships to the door upon the faintest suspicion of being about to be put to the test: how the warmest protestations of the poor man who knows he cannot fulfil them, cool down into cautious reserve when he becomes rich. Who is there that preserves in his manhood the boyish bloom of his open-hearted teens? It is good and elevating to believe that there are such men—but as it is a rare fortune to meet them, let them be honored, cherished, and loved in proportion to their scarcity.

Tom Raggles, no doubt, found himself inconveniently pressed upon by the numerous tag-rag and bobtail of his former associations, who all wanted to borrow money of him, and implicitly believed that his ac-

cession to independence would be the making of them: so, without much ceremony, he abruptly shut the door upon his needy and wasteful old friends, turned his face to the desk, and set to work at his business with the avidity of a miser. The times had undergone a change as well as Tom Raggles. The wars were over: there was no more provisioning, victualling, and contracting; the Assurance Office had taken lodgings for itself in a branch office; the Loan Fund had dropped down sixteen per cent.; and the famous establishment of Ebenezer Raggles had subsided into a general shop, such as are common to small country towns, a kind of Noah's Ark, in which all sorts of things are to be had "from a needle to an anchor."

If old Ebenezer, who had been so grievously twitted by Tom for his ante-diluvian maxims touching industry and economy, could have seen him in his altered condition. he would have witnessed an eccentric graft upon his own example. Being deficient in the breadth of understanding and the knowledge of mankind, by which his father had achieved his position, Tom conducted his affairs upon the narrowest and meanest principles, saved pence where his father had made shillings, and for all his diligence and parsimony, never succeeded in conciliating the respect of the townspeople, And such was the moral of the new generation, which had scoffed so superciliously at the old one.

For years and years, Tom Raggles plodded on, leading laborious days, and scorning all delights of festive board and womankind, gathering wrinkles on his face and hands, and living as abstinently as a monk of La Trappe. Out of that unsocial state, however. he was doomed to be disturbed at last, and in a way which, considering how thin his blood had become, and how all sense of the pleasant things of the world had been dried up in him, may be described as something truly surprising.

When this great crisis in his life arrived, Tom was, at least, on the shady side of fifty-five. He was a small thread of a man, with the aspect of one who had been baked in an oven and overdone. There were two very strong presumptive arguments against the likelihood that Tom Raggles would ever marry; firstly, the difficulty of obtaining his own consent; secondly, the difficulty of finding somebody to consent on the other side. Yet Tom Raggles did marry in the face of all difficulties; and, piling wonder upon wonder, he married a young wife.

Barbara Flight was the daughter of a widow of a purser in the navy, and lived in a retired way in the suburbs. It was said that Mrs. Flight had been a flame of Tom's in his younger days, and that the purser, being obliged to join his ship suddenly, pressed his suit with such vigor that he carried off the lady while Tom was deliberating over a proposal. The report might have been only a flying scandal, but certain it was that Tom, when he had renounced all other social enjoyments, was a frequent visitor in the evenings at Mrs. Flight's. Some people surmised that he was courting the widow, for it never entered into any body's head to suspect him of a design upon the daughter, who had only just turned twenty. And we are bound to add that it never entered into his own head to suspect himself of such a design. It grew over him like a net, and he was not at all aware of it till he was caught in it.

Barbara Flight was a slender girl, with very light hair, light eyes, and a light complexion. Her mind was colorless *en suite*. She was very easily amused, had no opinion of her own. took impressions as fast as they came, and lost them with equal facility. If Barbara could be said to have had a decided trait in her character, it was a love of dumb animals, especially cats and birds. Perhaps it was because they were the only parts of the creation over which she could hope to exercise any power, (which Mr. Pope says is the predominant passion of women, whether they are strong or feeble,) and because she could talk on a-head to them in her own light, prattling, no-meaning way, without check or restraint. While Tom Raggles and her mother were engaged in musty old talk about old times, and the wonderful changes that had taken place in the world since they were first acquainted, interspersed with practical observations on the price of provisions, Barbara was usually employed in playing hide-and-seek in a great chair with a kitten, or whispering, like a *siffleur*, with her canary. Whenever she was drawn into the larger conversation, it was only as audience, for she rarely hazarded an original remark.

Tom Raggles took very little notice of Barbara in the beginning: he looked upon her as a child amusing herself about the room. But Barbara was growing up into a habit with him without his knowing it, and he came to miss her, at last, when she happened to be out of the way. Habit is a great tyrant with lean, lonely people, when their lives become contracted, and their sympathies narrowed to a solitary point.—How this habit grew upon him more and more by stealthy, imperceptible degrees,—how unconscious Barbara was of it,—how little she thought about Mr. Raggles, or anybody or anything else, except the cat and the bird,—and how oddly it all came round to a discovery one evening, arising out of something Mr. Raggles said, without

intending it,—need not be related in detail. It will be enough to observe, that Mr. Raggles went home that night, wondering at himself, and wondering at Barbara, and in such an obscure state of mind that he went to bed with his cravat on.

The next day he didn't believe a word of it. He was like a man getting up out of a dream, and the daylight and its occupations put it all out of his thoughts; and when he set out in the evening to visit Mrs. Flight as usual, he had a feeling of buoyancy, and a gay sort of giddiness in his step, which was new to him, and which was the only token he could detect in himself of any change that had been wrought in him. But when he arrived at the house, he suddenly felt himself very sick and tremulous; and when Mrs. Flight asked him what was the matter, he felt as if his head would fly off, and as if his ears were burning and cracking down to the roots. He supposed that he was expected to say something about the evening before, and that the best thing he could say would be something jocose, to turn it all off into a laugh; but the more he tried to think of a joke, the more he couldn't think of anything but a dismal mist that was before his eyes, dancing up and down like a phantasmagoria. As for Barbara, she was nursing her cat as unconcernedly as if nothing had happened—a spectacle of guileless simplicity which smote him to the heart, and made him feel wretchedly guilty, although he could not tell why or wherefore.

Mrs. Flight was a very sensible woman, and saw how it was quite plainly. She, therefore, allowed Mr. Raggles to go on from bad to worse, knowing that the more he floundered in the net the more he must entangle and exhaust himself. Clever as he was in other ways, he was no match for Mrs. Flight. But there was nothing remarkable in that. When a woman sets about a business of this sort, she has ways of compassing her ends which sharper faculties than Tom Raggles could boast of cannot penetrate.

Watching her opportunity judiciously, after he had committed himself over and over again by the strangeness of his behavior, and by tumbling into the pits she had laid for him, Mrs. Flight opened the affair herself in an indirect manner, and with a motherly tenderness, which totally bewildered him. She considered such a union out of all reason; she never was more surprised in her life than when she first began to suspect that he had thoughts of her daughter; Barbara was quite a child, and she was sure that such an idea as marriage had never entered her mind; he was old enough to be her father, and one would imagine that, instead of going on for fifty, as he must be from what she remembered him, he was a spanking young fellow of five-and-twenty; but she had such a regard for him, for the sake of old times, that if she really could bring herself to believe that it was for his happiness, she hardly knew what to say about it; but nothing could induce her to bias the poor child's inclination in such a matter, so he must not build up his hopes, like a foolish boy, upon her influence. These little obstacles, which came so naturally in the way were irresistible; and Tom Raggles, as unconscious of what he was doing as if he had been asleep, declared that he was downright miserable, (which he was,) that he could not tell how it happened (which was true also,) and that he hoped she would break it to Barbara, and make him a happy man, or some stuttering exclamation to that effect. There is a regular course in these things, and when a man goes to a certain point he thinks he must go on; and so Raggles went on, till the declaration was duly made and clenched.

Mrs. Flight represented the business to her daughter with all the requisite maternal caution. She was quite aware, she said, of the disproportion between their ages, but then Raggles was not so old as he looked by many years, and there were some men who were younger at forty than other men at two-and twenty; besides, she had known Raggles from his childhood, and, if *she* were to make a choice, there was nobody to whom she could so safely trust her dear child, he was such a good man, so thoughtful and kind, and then he was so well off; and what a blessing it would be to her to think that, if anything should happen to her, (and she knew she couldn't live a great many years,) her darling would be so comfortably provided for; indeed she looked upon it altogether as a most providential circumstance, and could hardly persuade herself that it was true until she should see them both come home from church, and eating the wedding-dinner; and wouldn't they have a merry-making that day!

It is possible that Barbara for the first time in her life, may have ventured upon this occasion to think a little on her own account, for she did not say much to her mother about it, beyond giving her accustomed mechanical assent to what she had been saying, and her mother did not press her much at this time for an answer, but left the providential circumstance to operate in silence upon her mind. For a day or two Barbara was not quite as easy as usual, and had a terror of meeting Mr. Raggles, but it passed off like a summer cloud; and on the following Sunday Mrs. Flight had the satisfaction of hearing her daughter called in church, and of seeing the people

standing up on tip-toe in their pews to look at her.

Nor was she disappointed in the wedding-dinner. It took place at her own house; and supreme was her delight when a chaise and pair appeared at the door to convey the happy couple, in the dusk of the evening, to an inn about five miles off, where they were to spend a honey-moon of two clear days.

It would be desirable to draw the curtain at once upon the lovers, for the reader knows well enough what usually ensues upon the marriage of January and May; but the necessities of our narrative require that we should glance at them in their own house, and see how they got on when the bridal ardor had abated, and they dropped down again into their natural characters under the action of new circumstances.

When Mr. Raggles brought home his wife, he found that he did not exactly know what to do with her. He had made no calculation of the extensive changes which are produced by the appearance of a mistress in the menage of an old bachelor. While the place was new to her, Mrs. Raggles was perpetually running in and out of the rooms, and up and down stairs, and flirting into the shop, and ringing the bells, and ordering the maid-of-all-work about, and sending out the shopman, with whom we have already made acquaintance in the person of Richard Rawlings, on trivial messages, and creating a hubbub and disturbance all day long, that effectually broke up the clock-work routine of the house. Mr. Raggles was fairly taken aback by the extraordinary sprightliness of motion she exhibited; nor could he comprehend how that quiet girl, who purred about her mother's little parlor so noiselessly, could have become so troublesome all of a sudden. But Raggles was not a profound man on some subjects, and least of all, on the philosophy of female character.

The young wife, upon her translation to a house of her own, thought she was to have everything her own way, or, rather, she never thought about it, but, by an instinct common to most newly-married ladies, particularly to such as men fall in love with for their shyness and timidity, she sprang somewhat too eagerly into possession. The feeling of being released from restraint, and made, as she supposed, mistress of her actions, had loosened the pent-up vivacity of girlhood, and carried her away on a spring-tide of animal spirits. It may have been, also, that she derived a few salutary hints from her mother upon the importance of establishing her domestic authority in the first instance, and that she knew no better way of setting about it than that of making a prodigious rattle, to the total disruption of the peace and economy of the household.

If Mrs. Raggles had committed an error of judgment in imagining that she was to enter upon a career of perfect freedom and independence, Mr. Raggles, on his part, had fallen into a mistake equally delusive, and, perhaps, less excusable in a person of his age and experience. He confidently believed that he had married a patient Grisel, whose voice could never be heard in the house, who would tread the stairs like a mouse, do exactly as she was desired, and never interfere with his business. Within a week they were mutually undeceived; and then began a struggle for the upper hand, which speedily brought matters to a clearer understanding between them.

Had Mrs. Raggles inherited some of her mother's tact and sagacity, she might have gained a few advantages in the civil war. But it is useless to speculate upon such an hypothesis. Mrs. Raggles was not endowed with the requisite strength of will, womanly wit, or keenness of perception to enable her to come off the field of battle with a single trophy. She was routed at all points, horse and foot, ignominiously made prisoner, and shut up in her own room. Several diversions were attempted in her favor by Mrs. Flight; but the old lady, formidable at close quarters, was repulsed with disgrace, and forbidden the house.

The victory Mr. Raggles had thus secured was infinitely more decisive than if he had started a *casus belli* on the wedding-day, and established his authority by a *coup de main*. That process, which has often failed, might have bred secret discontents and conspiracies, and kept him under arms for the rest of his life. But both parties had now fairly tried their strength, and the result was conclusive.

Mrs. Raggles consequently sank into a life of passive obedience. She was treated like a puppet, Mr. Raggles having an inexorable grasp of the wires. The disparity between their ages took off something of the edge of this sharp practice, for, as they had very little in common between them in the way of tastes and sentiments, it was no great penalty to her to be left to herself, and relieved from the trouble of thinking how she should act. It was a sort of existence which agreed wonderfully with the ductility of her nature. Nobody could ever have supposed that she was unhappy. Once she had settled down into tacit acquiescence, she was as content as a child, that having been punished for a fault, quickly forgets its tears, and hides itself in a corner to amuse itself. As to that melancholy blank in the affections, which sentimental novelists would have us believe invariably supervenes upon

ill-assorted marriages, it would be affectation to pretend that Mrs. Raggles underwent any secret suffering of the kind. If Mr. Raggles did not awaken any tender emotions in her heart, she was amply compensated by the attachment of her Angola cat, upon whom she lavished her vacant caresses. In this manner Mr. and Mrs. Raggles lived together for a space of three years, which brings us to the point of time at which our history commences. In the meanwhile, to the inconsolable grief of a numerous circle of friends, to whom she was endeared by the practice of every virtue that could adorn a pious Christian, Mrs. Flight had taken wing to heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

WHICH CONDUCTS US TO THE FOOT OF THE LADDER.

While Richard Rawlings was creeping softly up the stairs to the sick man's chamber, Mrs. Raggles was seated in the little parlor at the back of the shop, engaged in a consolatory conversation with Nurse Waters, who had just resigned her charge to Mr. Pogey, and come down to take her ease for a while over a potation of hot rum and water. The remains of a cold fowl, a bottle and glasses, a posset basin, and one or two medicine vials were on the table, and ranging amongst the plates and dishes, with bland and graceful step, was a large Angola cat.

'There's no good in frettin' yourself,' observed Nurse Waters; 'leave trouble a day's march behind you, and look out a-head. Life's a journey, and them that lives best on the road, can keep up the longest. Never look back.'

Nurse Waters was the individual alluded to by Crikey Snaggs as the 'widder.' Her real history was rather obscure. Nobody actually knew whether she was a widow or not, and it was a subject upon which she never showed any inclination to enlighten her acquaintance. She had lived in Yarlton for a space of nine years, and was known there as the Widow Waters. Her occupations were multifarious. She went out as a nurse, or as anything else to fill up a temporary gap in a household. There were various speculations afloat about her widowhood, for as she did not choose to publish her biography, the particulars were supplied by the invention of her neighbors. Some said that they did not believe she was ever married, and others that they shrewdly suspected if she had ever had a husband, he must have been hanged or transported.—But she pursued the even tenor of her course, regardless of these ill-natured insinuendoes, and managed to make out a precarious livelihood in spite of them, and to ingratiate herself wherever she was employed, by taking a greater interest in other people's family concerns than she seemed to take in her own. Nurse Waters was a thin, wiry woman, with a prominent aquiline nose and sharp features, a shrewd, practical woman, who stood upon her experience, and was peculiarly qualified to supply the place of the lamented Mrs. Flight, in the counsels of Mrs. Raggles, at this trying crisis of her life.

'He was too old for you, dear,' continued Nurse Waters; 'you didn't expect to go before him, did you? It's in the hands of heaven, and you'd better dry your eyes and leave it there. If it was me, I'd make up my mind to it. Never look back! It's the future that's everything to us all.'

'Very true,' replied Mrs. Raggles, parting with both hands her long hair, which had been much disordered by the violence of her emotions, and was continually falling over her face; 'but, after all, you know, he was my husband.'

'So he was, dear,' returned Nurse Waters, 'there's no denying that; and, as long as he was your husband, you did what was right by him. But it isn't because he was your husband, that you're to fret yourself to fiddle-strings for him. I don't mean to disparage the poor man: but I say that there's no man worth grieving after. As to myself, all mankinds dead to me, and I've nothing to look to but myself; but in your case, Mrs. Raggles, dear, it's a horse of another color. It ain't for a young woman like you, with the world before you, to break your heart for a husband that was old enough to be your father.'

'Close upon sixty,' replied Mrs. Raggles; 'but for all that, he'll leave worse behind him.'

'There never was a worse, but there was a worser,' rejoined Nurse Waters.

'My poor mother used to say,' said Mrs. Raggles, 'that none knows how an ugly shoe fits but them that wears it.'

'True for her,' returned the widow; 'but you know, in the course of nature, it must wear out.'

'Don't say that, nurse,' replied Mrs. Raggles—'don't say that; don't talk of a human being wearing out like a shoe. It hurts me.'

'And didn't the ugly shoe hurt you, too dear?' replied Nurse Waters. 'Now, between ourselves, and you know I have your interest at heart, wasn't he a cruel screw to you? What pleasure had you with him at all? It isn't to say that you were shut up like a bird in a cage, and hung up in a dark

room till you lost your music, dear, for a woman wouldn't mind that if she was comfortable elseways, but when did he ever speak a pleasant word to you? Was he the man to say to you, "Babby, dear, it's New-Year's Day, or it's Easter Monday, or it's your birth-day, and many happy returns of of the same to you?"'

'No, no,' returned Mrs. Raggles, readjusting her hair.

'And as to his being a good provider,' continued Nurse Waters—'drat them all, that's the way they get out of it. A good provider! Why, he was bound by law to provide for you. Who thanks a husband for what one eats and drinks? That's the least they can do for the aches and pains we go through for them. And if he was a good provider, I wonder has he taken care to leave you comfortable behind him?'

Mrs. Raggles shook her head.

'That's the point, dear,' resumed Nurse Waters; 'have you turned in your mind what you're going to do with the place when he's gone?'

'I never once thought of it,' replied Mrs. Raggles.

'Then you ought,' returned the widow, half-closing her eyes, and stooping over in a whisper, 'and the sooner the better. I know how things go when a woman's left unprotected, and you oughtn't to be unprotected long, that's another thing. Now, will you take a bit of advice from an old woman, dear?'

The Angola at this moment made a sudden whisk of her tail that nearly put out the candle.

'Take care of the candle, beauty!' exclaimed Mrs. Raggles; 'it mustn't burn it's darling tail, my precious! It wants something, does it? P-r-r-r. I'm sure it can't be hungry after the supper it made;' whereupon she proceeded to tempt its appetite with a side-bone, carefully stripping off the flesh into delicate morsels upon which the favorite regaled itself with the fastidious hesitation of an epicure.

The widow remarked what a great beauty of a cat it was, slily throwing in a hope that Mrs. Raggles would have something better to pet by-and-bye, at which Mrs. Raggles colored up, and the widow resumed the thread of her discourse.

'I was sayin',' she observed, 'that it was high time for you to think of yourself.—Everything's at sixes and sevens, and there's no tellin' what plunderin' goes on when there's nobody to look after a house. You ought to get a friend to see to it for you.'

'But who can I get?' said Mrs. Raggles.

'Well, then, indeed,' replied Nurse Waters, 'I've no very good opinion, as you know, of menkind, for, I'll tell the honest truth, I think them all much alike, as far as that goes: but we can't do without them sometimes, and more particular when there's a death in the family. You ought to have a man, dear, to look into the business for you, and I think we can find one that would do it, and be glad.'

'Who?' inquired Mrs. Raggles.

'Who?' responded the widow, humorously crimping her lips; 'who? What do you think of Mr. Pogey, dear?'

'Mr. Pogey!' exclaimed Mrs. Raggles, with a look of astonishment.

'There's no such another in the town,' continued Nurse Waters; 'if Pogey took up the business it would be as good as done; and from what I have heard him say of you ——'

'Of me?' said Mrs. Raggles, her face becoming suddenly suffused in a glow of scarlet. 'What in the world could he ever have to say of me?'

'Nothing but what was becoming in him to say,' replied the widow; 'what makes you blush, dear? Is it because Pogey's a bachelor?' she added, with a glittering blink of one eye.

'How can you go on so?' said Mrs. Raggles, shockingly confused.

'If you have Pogey for your friend,' continued the widow, 'you're a made woman for life.'

'But——'

'I don't heed your buts,' interrupted Nurse Waters: 'he's a bachelor, and has an eye in his head. That's enough; I'll say no more. Look for'ard, dear, that's all! The widow's cap's uncommon becomin' to fair hair.'

Mrs. Raggles was sadly fluttered at these unseasonable remarks. She thought it cruel and unnatural in Nurse Waters to introduce such a subject at such a moment; she was very much vexed with her; she was so much vexed, that it put everything else out of her head; and although she was very angry with herself for it, she could not help, all she could do, wondering what on earth Pogey could have said about her, and how she should look in a widow's cap.

While she was revolving these matters in her mind, the door opened, and Joey made her appearance. It was impossible to mistake the frightful glare of her face. Joey tried to articulate, but instead of words, only uttered a husky cry; and throwing her apron over her head, began to work her knuckles into her eyes. Nurse Waters saw how it was, and telling Mrs. Raggles to keep herself quiet, desired Joey to deliver her message.

It was to tell Mrs. Raggles to hasten up stairs. Mr. Pogey had sent for her.

Place, time, and circumstance make little difference in the chamber of death. Whe-

ther the hangings be of Genoa velvet or Manchester cotton matters little in the shadow of eternity which is over the silent room. Rich and poor, proud and humble, the wronged and the wrong-doer, are here brought to a common level. Their stormy passions, their grand projects, their great revenges,—what are they here in the presence of the dead?—a breath of air, which thrills a leaf, and passes on. What are our loves and hates here? our honors, our humiliations?—a poor fading dream! Upon this threshold, the unreality of life is made clear to us, and we see the pageant vanishing before our eyes. Vain, distracted Love, frantic Jealousy, delusive Hope, Intellect that has ruled, and Beauty that has agitated the world,—what space do ye fill here in this narrow passage between the two lives of the Past and the Future?—bubbles of light that float into the twilight and disappear. Bow down rebuked, poor broken heart of earth, and beneath the veil of the falling darkness, pray for grace to forgive and be forgiven!

When Richard entered the room where Raggles lay, and saw the eyes of the dying man looking anxiously towards the door, as if watching for his coming, he felt, for the first time, something like a sentiment of pity and pardon for all that had passed between them. It was no time for human resentments. The earthy flavor of the atmosphere which sometimes precedes, and always follows death in ill-ventilated rooms, was heavy and oppressive. A ghastly change had taken place in the features of the old man, since he had seen him only a few hours before: the skin had assumed a leaden hue, and had shrunk into the cheeks, the eyes were glassy, the lips livid and compressed, and the nostrils dilated. Even Mr. Pogey, who stood at the bedside, appeared struck by the alteration, and beckoning Richard into a corner, told him, in rather a pompous and oracular way, that Raggles had not many minutes to live—that he had been calling for him so wildly and vehemently that he was sure there was something on his mind, and then, branching off into a rambling allusion to the wonderful action of the mind upon the body, and the body upon the mind, he warned Richard that the patient might go off like a snuff with the least overexcitement, and that he must be careful to hear what he had to say without flurrying him by questions or remarks. The precaution was necessary, for Richard was deeply affected by the scene before him. But he had a painful consciousness that Mr. Pogey was superior to such emotions.

He approached the bed noiselessly, and looked earnestly at Raggles, hoping to attract his attention without speaking, but although Raggles' eyes were fixed upon him, he was apparently unconscious of his presence.

At last Richard said in a low voice, 'Richard, sir.'

'Richard!' repeated Raggles.

'You wished to see me, sir.'

'Ah! ha! are you there, Richard?'

"Yes, sir.'

'Where? where? Let me feel your hand;' and spreading out his wasted fingers, he muttered, 'Send them away.'

Richard silently motioned Mr. Pogey to leave them together. But Mr. Pogey had no intention to go. Perhaps he was a little curious to ascertain the nature of the revelation he supposed the patient was about to make. So he made a sign that he would remain concealed behind the curtains. Ceremony was out of the question on such an occasion, and Richard, quietly moving over to the door, and opening it wide, motioned Mr. Pogey to withdraw. The decision of his manner very much astonished the apothecary, who, evidently disconcerted at his summary ejection, flounced out, with a glance at the sick man, and another at Richard, which was meant to convey an expression of profound indignation.

Having closed the door, Richard resumed his place at the bedside.

'Well, sir,' he said.

'Are we alone?' cried Raggles.

'Yes, sir,' returned Richard.

'Richard,' cried Raggles, 'stoop down—lower—lower.'

Richard placed his ear close to his mouth, and with difficulty gathered a few unconnected words.

'Did you hear me?' screamed Raggles, in an angry voice.

'Where did you say, sir?' inquired Richard.

'Ah! ha! down—down—in the drawer—ah! Lord, pity me!—what a time you are! have you got them?'

The drawer to which Raggles directed him, was in a table close to the bed.

'It is locked,' said Richard, having in vain attempted to open it.

'Ah, Lord!' cried Raggles, 'make haste—the keys—under the pillow——'

Richard searched under the pillow, and found a bunch of keys. He tried them in succession, and at last the drawer yielded.

'Have you got it?' cried Raggles, gasping with impatience.

'Is this it?' asked Richard, drawing out an old pocket-book, fastened with a clasp, and carefully tied round the ends and sides with tape.

'Let me feel—let me feel—ah! ha!—in that; stoop—don't let them hear me.'

From the violence of his excitement his voice had become fainter, and he whispered

again in Richard's ear, with a great effort. The communication this time was more clear than before, and when Richard had collected its meaning, a visible shudder passed over his face.

'Do you hear?' screamed Raggles, in an agony of mental and physical torture.

'Every word,' returned Richard; 'shall I open it now?'

'No—no—no—not now. Ah! Lord, pity me!—li-ten!'

Richard bent down again, and the drowning voice gurgled fearfully in his ear.

'I have signed the papers,' said Raggles, his words becoming more indistinct, and his respiration more difficult—'those—in the pocket-book—I am dying, Richard—dying—Lord! forgive me my sins!—this weighed heaviest of all—I never told it—nobody knows it—but you—you—if they knew it, they would seize all—you will stand between us—Richard!—I can't see your face—you will do it?'

'I promise it,' replied Richard, who, not being familiar with death, was terribly shaken by the contortions which shook the frame of the old man.

'Hide it—hide it,' gasped out the dying man; 'it's very dark—dark—pray for me, Richard!—pray for me!—kneel down!—let me hear you pray!'

And Richard bent down, and prayed aloud.

The miserable old man had his death-bed secret, and in the end had no one to confide it to but the drudge, whose spirit he had bruised and crushed. Who is there that in his life-time has not been burthened with some secret, of which the world has had no suspicion? Beneath the mask of society, as beneath the waters of the ocean, strange things are engulfed and hidden, and as rarely, too, brought up to the surface. The gay boon-companion, whose radiant mirth infects the table with laughter—who knows what gloomy thoughts lie in the depths of his solitude? The pattern husband, whose house is the elisium of domestic bliss; the bride, who wears her orange flower with such an air of tender happiness; the irreproachable merchant, whose life is a homily on the Exchange; the divine, whose meek piety draws tears from the congregation; who shall tell us what canker is corroding at their hearts in the midst of the flutter of life? And Raggles had his secret, like the rest of us; it had been pent up in the loneliness of an uncomfortable existence, and it was an ease and consolation to him to give vent to it at last.

While Richard was kneeling at the bedside, the door opened, and Mr. Pogey came in, followed by Mrs. Raggles and Nurse Waters. It was solemn and wretched enough to see them gathering round, and kneeling down, and burying their heads in the clothes, and to hear the stifled sobs of Mrs. Raggles. But he who lay there was insensible to the sights and sounds of this world. His spirit had passed away.

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH THE READER MAKES THE ACQUAINTANCE OF MR. POGEY.

One of the principal shops in the market-place of Yarlton was closed; the blinds of the windows up to the front of the house were neatly drawn down; two mutes in holiday black, with tall poles in their hands, kept guard at the door like churchyard halberdiers; and the street was as still as if it had been a Sabbath morning, hardly anybody being abroad except a few neighbors standing about their doors, and a group of urchins watching the gestures of the mutes with great curiosity to see what was to come next.

In a country town Death discharges the functions of a coroner. He summonses the inhabitants to sit upon an inquest. Or he may be described as the curator of an anatomical museum, which he supplies with bodies for the public at large to cut up. The subject given out for dissection in this instance was the character of the late Mr. Raggles; and it was dissected accordingly. The result of the *post-mortem* examination, we are afraid, was not very satisfactory; but it presented no interruption to the decorum which the English habitually observe on such occasions. Indeed the only faces that could not be said to harmonize strictly with the general gravity were those of the mutes, two carbuncled and dissipated-looking individuals, whose efforts to get up a funeral sadness in their swollen features had, it must be owned, rather a contrary effect upon the spectators.

The arrangements within-doors were confided to Mr. Pogey, who took all the trouble of that melancholy business upon himself, showing an alacrity that more than justified the lavish encomiums of Nurse Waters. Mr. Pogey was a fussy little man, with a wonderful fund of animal spirits, and an intimate knowledge of the details connected with weddings, christenings, burials, picnics, balls, and social meetings of every kind. It made no difference to him whether he was called upon to officiate in the house of pleasure or the house of mourning, so long as he had a predominant hand in the affair. Nature had gifted him with a genius for the bustle and ordering of such transactions.

Mr. Pogey was the architect of his own

fortunes, as the saying goes, and owed all his successes to indomitable perseverance and overwhelming vivacity. He had fortunately entered the profession long before the legislature had hit upon the Apothecaries' Act, which requires that candidates shall be slightly qualified for admission. Having served a short apprenticeship in sweeping out a druggist's shop, he set up for himself, and carried everything before him by the force of that facial confidence which puts all other sorts of merit to the rout. He laid out his stock of knowledge to the best possible advantage, and whenever his science happened to be at a loss he appealed triumphantly to common sense against the humbug of medical mysteries. A system of practice so flattering to the understandings of his patients secured him a wide popularity, which his social talents, his skill in telling stories and quoting books, and his constitutional hilarity, daily extended. The regular humdrum faculty had no chance with the million against Mr. Pogey.

His management of the obsequies of Mr. Raggles was perfect. Having settled all the necessary preliminaries in an interview with his "own" undertaker, and decided upon the programme of the funeral, which was to consist of a respectable hearse and a coach to convey six persons, his next care was to bespeak an agreeable spot in the churchyard, and an economical tablet with an inscription upon it of his own composition. Upon all these items he effected a considerable saving, being, as he explained to the widow, so good a customer to the sexton and the undertaker that they were always glad to oblige him on the cheapest terms.

These indispensable preparations being duly completed, and the house being put into order, he invited a few friends to attend on the morning of the ceremony, including Mr. John Peabody, whose company, in the paucity of more intimate connections, was requested on the suggestion of Richard Rawlings. Mr. Pogey kindly undertook to act as chief mourner himself.

While the guests were assembling in the parlor, Mrs. Raggles, by the instructions of Mr. Pogey, was closely chambered up stairs with her sympathising companion, Nurse Waters.

The morning was clear and frosty, and very cold. Nurse Waters discreetly avoided much conversation, leaving Mrs. Raggles free to indulge in the ruminations incidental to her situation. It would be difficult to convey an accurate impression of the fugitive reflections that chased each other over the surface of Mrs. Raggles' mind during the agitating hour that preceded the departure of the funeral. So long as the body lay in the house, she could hardly persuade herself that she really was a widow.—The presence of the old man still seemed to possess itself of the place, and her heart beat strangely under the influence of that feeling. But she thought of what Nurse Waters had said about the widow's cap; and the image of her fair hair folded up beneath its snowy borders flitted coquettishly before her. Then, by an involuntary association of ideas, Mr. Pogey presented himself, and, although she felt the tears coming into her eyes, she was conscious of a little secret womanly exultation at the compliments he paid her upon her appearance. By and bye the widow's cap was put aside, and her hair was released, and she had once more a choice of colors, and could suit her complexion as she pleased. Then there were little excursions into the country, and nobody to watch her, and she might be as capricious as the wind, go in and out when she liked, make pleasant acquaintances, and visit them, and have nice parties of her own, her imagination at this point venturing even into a dance; and, notwithstanding that Mr. Pogey seemed to exercise a sort of spell over the future, she resolved that neither Mr. Pogey, nor anybody else, should control her actions. She had been kept down long enough; but she was now her own mistress, and liberty was sweet; and she determined to enjoy it. In the midst of these discursive meditations, some movements in the house suddenly recalled her to a sense of her present circumstances, the pageant vanished, and she lapsed back again into a reverie in which the apparition of her late husband displaced the florid vision of the gay Mr. Pogey.

In the meanwhile the party below stairs were solemnly regailing themselves with cake and wine. Pogey related two or three capital stories of incidents and coincidences that had happened to him on similar occasions; and imparted such a flavor of subdued pleasantry to the scene, keeping, however, within legitimate bounds, that he effectually dissipated the predisposition to be dismal which the mourners had brought into the room. He saw no necessity for giving way to uncomfortable sensations; and was of opinion that the true philosophy of life consisted in making the best of a calamity. John Peabody perfectly agreed with him, and asked him specially to take a glass of wine, and like genuine optimists, they clinked their glasses gently together, Mr. Pogey good-humoredly declaring that he never prescribed any draught for his friends with half so much pleasure as a glass of good old wine. John Peabody was delighted with this disinterested sentiment; and from that moment Mr. Pogey booked him as a patient.

'What do you say, Higgs?' cried Pogey, addressing a tall, pallid man, who looked as if he had been dieted all his life upon sour apples and water; 'eh! Higgs? Wine, my boy!—immortal wine—the best of all physic—eh! Higgs?'

'Ah! Doctor,' returned Higgs, coughing sepulchrally; 'it's all constitution, you know.'

'Something in that, Higgs; but a man's constitution is like a Stilton cheese; steep it well in wine, my boy, and it will grow mellow. The poets, you know, who are capital judges, recommend wine—rosy wine—so do I. But you don't trouble yourself much about the poets—something more substantial to think of, eh! Higgs.'

'That's it, Doctor,' said a burly, short-necked man, joining the group, with a full glass in his hand; 'but life is short, as we see every day; and, as I say to Higgs, it's a duty we owe to our families to keep up the stamina.'

'A duty,' said Pogey, 'which no man has discharged more zealously than yourself. Why, it doesn't cost you five shillings a year in drugs.'

'Well, on the word of a man,' replied the other, sipping his wine, 'I don't think it does.'

'I wish all my friends were like you,' observed Pogey, giving the burly man a sly poke of his finger on his broad expanse of waisteoat; 'you're my show patient. I always say, look at Fubsley! There's health for you! A deeply interesting case of natural health. If the departed had taken a leaf out of your book—eh! Fubsley?—I could have ensured him a ten years' renewal. Poor Raggles—a thin liver—wonder he weathered it so long—slops and pills—pills and slops—all artificial—trusted nothing to nature. Now, my advice is, consult nature. She's the best physician. Latterly Raggles lost his appetite; how could he expect to keep it? Appetite, as the divine Shakspeare says, grows upon feeding. That's the grand secret. Take a race-horse; you must feed him well to keep him up to his work. Just the same with a man. The first question that I put to a patient is, 'How is your appetite?' If the appetite's gone, we must create one; if we can't, we must treat him *secundum artem*, which, stript of humbug, means that we must do the best we can. That's common sense, I believe—eh! Higgs?'

'Good plain reason,' observed Fubsley; 'and no mystification. That's what I say; show me the reason of it, and I'll swallow a doctor's shop, bottles, and all. But to see a guy of a fellow creaking into your room, shaking his head and creaking out again, without leaving you a bit the wiser—that's what I call downright imposture.'

'I must confess,' said Pogey, 'it looks very like it; but you mustn't abuse the faculty, my dear fellow. There are *some* honest men amongst them: as to myself, everybody knows that I abhor humbug. No man shall take my drugs without knowing the reason why. That's my system. What does a man pay his money for? Hasn't he a right to know the nature of his own case, so that he can judge for himself? I hate doctoring in the dark. But the faculty must live, you know; and if people choose to destroy the coats of their stomachs, stop the circulation of the blood, and paralyse the nervous economy, by drenching themselves with mixtures they know nothing about, they must take the consequences, that's all. For my part, I'd rather keep my patients alive and hearty. That's my object. Look at Fubsley; there's a specimen, and no mistake!' and the burly illustration of Pogey's system was constrained to submit to another triumphant poke in the waisteoat, which nearly upset the glass that shook in his hand, under the vibration of a violent chuckle.

A counter-joke of Fubsley's was cut short by a heavy sound which came down the stairs at short intervals; and presently the muffled trampling of feet through the hall announced the close of the preliminary solemnity. Then came the jaunty undertaker, with a wardrobe of cloaks and hat-bands on his arm. Pogey, as chief-mourner, was robed first, and then the rest in succession, all in dumb show. Richard Rawlings was the last. His hand trembled as he tried on a pair of black gloves.

'Two large for you,' whispered the undertaker, handing him a smaller pair. 'You should always have 'em a little tight.'

'These are too small,' said Richard.

'Not a morsel,' whispered the undertaker, working them on his fingers: 'curious thing happened the other day with this same pair. You don't wear a ring?'

'No—no—make haste.'

'A gentleman,' continued the undertaker, 'that was a tryin' of 'em on, as it might be you—in forcin' of 'em he found a ring in that very finger.'

'A ring! how was that?'

'Why, somebody, you see, had been a tryin' of 'em afore, and I suppose they were'n big enough, and so in pullin' of 'em off, off comes the ring, without his missin' of it in the hurry; and there it laid in the finger till the gloves were wanted again.—Very odd, wasn't it? There's some sort of a fate in these here gloves, I do believe. They fit you exact.'

Richard did not pay much attention to the undertaker's story, as the company were already leaving the room, Mr. Pogey having

led the way into the street, where several persons had assembled. The coach was at the door, and the hearse a little in advance. The undertaker glided out to his post, and, letting down the steps, received the chief mourner in due form. Pogey paused complacently for a moment or two, looked round, recognised a few faces, nodded familiarly to them, and stept in, followed by the rest of the mourners, whose blooming cheeks, with the exception of Mr. Higgs, who looked more ghastly than usual, showed that they had not been wanting in respectful oblations to the memory of the departed. The procession then moved off, attended by a straggling retinue, to the churchyard.

Here Mr. Pogey appeared to great advantage. When the last rites were ended, and 'earth to earth' had given out its hollow sound, and the grave-diggers were pausing over their shovels, he drew from his pocket a large sheet of paper, which he slowly unfolded, and, calling the attention of his friends to the epitaph that was inscribed upon it, he began, after a formal preparation, to read it aloud in a grand voice, undulating with rythmical cadences. It set forth that the stone was sacred to the memory of Thomas Raggles of that parish, whose soul had shaken off its mundane ties, and spurning the earth, had ascended to its native skies, and then, enumerating his exemplary virtues as a husband and a son, which ensured him a heavenly crown when his worldly race was run, it called upon the Passenger to stop and drop a tear, winding up by recommending him to pray that he might be able to give as good an account of himself on the Resurrection Day.

The reading of this affecting epitaph went to the hearts of the excited listeners. Fubsley's eyes looked very watery and tender, and Higgs's cough was brought on afresh by the severity of his emotions. Even Pogey himself could hardly control his agitation, and when he recovered himself a little, he thanked them for the indulgence with which they had received his unworthy tribute to their dear friend, and modestly reminded them that, although it was entirely his own composition, the merit of it was to be ascribed solely to the subject.

Richard witnessed this scene with feelings of a different kind. He saw in it the realization of that apotheosis which his imagination had conjured up in the solitude of his own room, when he was making that secret inquisition into Raggles' affairs of which he was now beginning to discern the practical advantages. Here was the body of the cruel old man, reverently followed to the grave by 'troops of friends,' who stood, with their hats off, echoing a panegyric on his virtues. There was not one amongst them that did not know the meanness, heartlessness, and falsehood of his life, and did not secretly feel that the character given to him in the inscription was a monstrous lie from begining to end. Yet they pretended to believe that this wretched miser, who added arrant hypocrisy to the rest of his sins, was the best of husbands and sons, and that he had ascended straight to heaven to receive a crown of glory! How is this? thought Richard, who, brought up in the school of adversity, had little experience in the hollow pomp of social vanities, and was simple enough to see what was passing around him in its true light, and call it by its right name. How is it that men can thus be brought to dissimulate their real convictions, and prostrate themselves before an object that they despise? Why, gold does it all! Gold will buy up the consciences of men, and purchase homage for wealthy knavery, while honesty in rags goes begging through the world. Here was this great lesson impressed upon him in a special manner by an example springing up out of his own personal observation.

It was a sight never to be forgotten—a dark moral drawn from his own sufferings, and re-acting forcibly upon a temperament that had acquired a morbid sensibility from the habit of brooding over the wrongs of fortune. And then he remembered that a strange turn of circumstances had unexpectedly improved his position, and opened a path to him by which he might make his way to independence. He fancied he saw how this was to be accomplished. That morning, which deposited the remains of old Thomas Raggles in the grave, dawned with a new life for him; one generation was gone out, and another, full of hope and energy, was ascending upon its ruins; the course was clear before him: he was already, by unlooked-for chances, invested with the means to enter upon it; he was the recipient of Raggles' secret; it was the lever by which he was to raise himself to power, and become possessed of the talisman of wealth before which the gates of palaces and the hearts of men fly open. His spirit bounded within him as these glowing pictures of the future took form and color in his thoughts, and he was hardly conscious that the people were dropping away from the ground, when he was startled by the pressure of a hand upon his shoulder.

'Come, man, rouse yourself! It was rather melting, I own—that touch about the resurrection day hit them hard—eh, Rawlings?' exclaimed the cheerful voice of Mr. Pogey; 'but you musn't mind everything one puts into an epitaph, you know. When you're a rich man, and can afford a handsome family tomb, I'll write an inscription for you

that will astonish the natives. Why, I didn't say half that I might have said about old Raggles!'

'Indeed,' said Richard, 'it seems to me wonderful that you could have said so much.'

'Pooh—pooh! I was obliged to keep it down on account of the expense; but I reserved the best things for the next occasion.'

'What could you have added to his exemplary virtues, and his heavenly crown?' inquired Richard. 'I can think of nothing beyond that.'

'You can't think, of course,' rejoined Pogey; 'thinking is not your business, Rawlings. You haven't an inventive capacity. You're not a poet, my boy—a poet! I'll tell you as we walk along. You see I spoke of him only as a husband and a son; but as I originally wrote it, I showed him up as a philanthropist and a patriot,—threw in an allusion to British commerce and the wooden walls of old England, and ended by saying that he was the benefactor of the poor, the friend of the widow, and the protector of the orphan. Good that, eh?'

'You wrote that of Mr. Raggles?' said Richard. 'Astounding!'

'I thought you'd say so. Aint it good—eh? isn't it good? But it isn't lost—too good to be lost. I have kept a copy, and it shall do duty for the next wealthy old buffer that drops off.

'To be sure,' cried Richard; 'the next *wealthy* old fellow—that's it—whether it suits him or not.'

'What has that to do with it?' returned Pogey: 'suits him? You don't suppose when a man sits down to write an epitaph he stops to consider whether it will suit.—There would be an end to epitaphs if they were to be confined to facts. I know of no limit to the poetry of the churchyard except the cost of the stone and the cutting. That's the test of the virtues of the dead—eh, Rawlings? The man who has money enough to afford it, may be buried under a glorification of Faith, Hope, and Charity, heaped up as high as the Pyramids of Egypt. I believe I am right—eh?'

'I believe you are,' slowly responded Richard.

They had now reached the carriage which was waiting for them on the high-road. In his present mood, the keen and bracing air was more agreeable to Richard than the philosophical remarks of Mr. Pogey, and he declined the seat which that gentleman urged him to resume.

'A walk will do me good,' said Richard; 'I am jaded, and want a little exercise.'

'Well, you shall have your own way,' returned Pogey; 'but I must have a talk with you, on business. Come down to me this evening about seven. I shall be pretty well released by that time. Don't fail.'

Richard promised to come to him, and they separated, the party in the coach driving off gaily towards the town, and Richard striking by a foot-path across the fields into the country.

Wonderfully bright was the landscape around him. The sun was shining down upon the meadows, and sparkling in hedgerows, starred over with clinging icicles that hung like blossoms on the naked boughs. The grass was dry and crisp, and powdered with hoar-frost. A little black brook, leaping and running away under entangled meshes of osiers and brambles, sang gaily in his ears as he sauntered thoughtfully along. The sails of a mill catching the slanting rays, glistened fantastically at a little distance; and farther on, the life of a farm in full activity expanded before him. Men were mounted in trees, clipping and lopping; others were carting from the field to the sheds for the stalled cattle, others chopping firewood, and some driving teams of oxen; horses were in movement between the haggard and the barn, and the merry flails were filling the rick-houses with their music. All was astir, alive—every hand was busy—every face was radiant with health and occupation.

The sudden transition from the silent place of the dead to this open world of exertion and prosperous labor, was a sensible relief. Richard Rawlings breathed more freely as he passed along amidst the hearty toils of his fellow-men. There was an aspect of independence and self-reliance in these country sights that cheered and invigorated him, and gave him confidence in his own efforts. Industry and its rewards, typified by the teeming promises of the earth, were both before him. He saw the progress from small beginnings in seeds, and roots, and watchful culture, to large results in the crowning harvest, whose superabundance was to be laid out at rich interest in future husbandry—he saw it all pictured as in a panorama. He saw clearly, too, the necessity for constant exertion, and untiring vigilance to take advantage of shower and sunshine, to note the signs of the heavens, and the bursting life of the soil, and to turn all to the account of one great end, ministered to by a multitude of varied and incessant operations. The lesson was not lost upon him, and his mind, springing onward to the distant sequel, heedless of all obstacles of time, place, and circumstance, already revelled over some grand, but as yet rather vague and confused, achievement.

All of us who can recall the fleeting dreams of our youth, will remember the magnificent visions which have thus at times swept across our imagination, and in a mo-

ment of ecstacy carried us triumphantly to the remotest issues of our ambition, elevated the law student by a stroke of magic to the woolsack, and installed the incipient divine in the palace of Lambeth. Richard Rawlings had no definite scheme of life to work out: but he had a very distinct idea of the social importance of wealth, and to that tangible and intelligible object he strenuously resolved to dedicate his whole energies.

When a fixed purpose of this practical kind really sets in in youth, it turns the mind grey at once. The pleasant fancies, the happy self-illusions, the wayside temptations that seem to belong to that season of life as naturally as crocuses and violets to spring, are trampled down to bud no more. The boy advances by a single stride into manhood, without experience of the combatants, or the conflicts, he is to encounter in the great arena; but prepared for the struggle by an instinct, often wiser than wisdom, and by a settled resolution which collects his powers, means and opportunities in a single direction, and gives cumulative force to every step he takes. Gladness vanishes from his face, and serious thoughts drink up its brightness and its roses. The boy has the gravity of the man, without that timidity and fitful distrust of onward effort, which grow upon disappointment and the repressing knowledge of difficulties. We see this frequently in the common routine of mechanical pursuits, drying up the nourishing springs of youth, and withering life at its roots: but in Richard Rawlings it took higher range and wider scope, and was sustained by a constitutional vigor and elasticity that acquired increased strength from concentration.

The impressions made upon him during that long, solitary, ruminating walk, were vividly remembered in after years, and often came back upon him when stranger changes than he then dreamed of had passed over his life.

CHAPTER VI.

MR. POGEY AT HOME.

THE morning glided away imperceptibly. The day was gone before Richard knew how it went; for time passes with wonderful rapidity when the imagination goes out idling. Curious as Richard was to know what Mr. Pogey wanted with him, his impatience on that point did not seem to make the intervening hours drag heavily; he was more curious upon more distant objects, on the way to which a day was but a grain of sand in the glass; and when he found himself at seven o'clock in the evening on the threshold of Mr. Pogey's dispensary, he was hardly conscious of how the interval had flown since morning.

There he stood, hesitating for a moment, and collecting himself to meet the questioner with an impenetrable face. He knew Pogey to be a skilful distiller of other men's secrets, and he expected that he would probe him to the quick in the matter which had been confided to him by old Raggles. Let Pogey get anything out of him if he can. Pogey is a deep fellow, but it will take a longer line than his to sound Richard Rawlings.

Turning the handle of the door, he awakened a shrill, petulant little bell, which, communicating with the parlor beyond, brought Mr. Pogey bouncing out upon him, like a fantoccini figure which leaps from its concealment the moment you touch the spring.

The dispensary was a small dark shop, scantily lighted, and disclosing a dusky array of bottles and jars, a narrow counter, full of thin drawers with paper labels pasted on them, and a weighing machine in the shape of a tall wooden chair, standing bolt upright in one corner. The parlor behind was separated from the dispensary by a door, in the upper half of which was a window with a green curtain hanging inside. A round table stood in the centre of the parlor. One side of the room was occupied by a range of bookshelves, slightly out of the horizontal, filled by books much broken and tattered, and apparently not very carefully arranged, some being upside down, and others scattered about in odd volumes, varied by a stray gallipots and unknown surgical instruments, a fractured plaster cast of the head of Galen, some Chinese and Indian curiosities smothered up in dust, and here and there sundry and mysterious particles preserved in spirits, and fragments of bones suspended on threads. A glass case on another side exhibited a couple of punch bowls, and a hospitable supply of tumblers, interspersed with divers articles in plate and china. The room had a disorderly appearance, but was thoroughly warm and comfortable. A merry fire, throwing a broad glow over the decanters and glasses that covered the table, gave it a cozy and cheerful aspect.

'Punctual,' exclaimed Pogey, inflicting on Richard a friendly thrust in the ribs; 'seven to the minute. Come, deposit yourself in that easy chair. Right sort of a night for a chat by the fire; snug chair, that—eh?'

'Very,' returned Richard.

'Just put a hand to the table, and draw it over. Bachelors' board, my boy; we must wait upon ourselves. Nobody in the house but old Meg, and she's getting the oysters; and Pim, my assistant, and he's gone to bed with a toothache. But I know no reason

why we shouldn't be comfortable for all that—do you? Now, what will you take? There's some old rum—real Jamaica—and prime Cogniac that never saw the steps of the Custom House. What will you have?'

'I think I'll venture on a little rum,' said Richard.

'Good—can't make a mistake. Try a squeeze of lemon with it. Afraid of acids? A popular error. Acids are absolutely necessary to some constitutions, and act on the biliary ducts with a surprising effect. See what a deluge of lemon juice I shower into my tumbler, and I believe I'm tolerably free from bilious derangement. Come—there's the hot water—help yourself.

These hospitable preliminaries being concluded, Richard and his vivacious host drew close to the fire, and Pogey, throwing himself back in his chair, prepared to open the business of the evening. It was impossible for Mr. Pogey, when he had any object in view, to avoid a certain pomp of manner, which plainly announced that something was coming.

'Strange thing, Rawlings,' he commenced, 'that old Raggles should go off without making a will. Now, you know a good deal about his affairs—how d'ye think he'll cut up?'

'Can't even guess,' returned Richard: 'nobody knows less of his affairs.'

'Pooh—pooh! you must be confidential with me: the widow has placed everything in my hands, and we can't get on without you. Did he never talk to you about a will?'

'Never.'

Very odd, that!'

'There was no confidence between us on such subjects. He was a suspicious man, and never trusted anybody with his affairs.'

'But you know all about his business transactions—eh?'

'Merely in a general way; he kept all the particulars locked up.'

'Cautious old file! that explains how it is, that his papers are in such a mizzle. I can't make head or tail of them; and as to the widow—poor thing, between ourselves, she was quite thrown away in that quarter—she can't illuminate us. So we must go into the thing ourselves, and see how we stand.'

'I will give you all the help in my power,' returned Richard.

'Mysterious man, that Raggles,' said Pogey; 'as penurious as a rat—must have made a sight of money. What d'ye think?'

'He didn't spend much at all events.'

'Spend! He lived upon cheese-parings; could make a shilling do duty for half-a-crown; must have been saving all his life; and see what it comes to. To be sure the widow will have the advantage of it—that's something. She'll know what to do with it—eh, Rawlings? Charming woman—suppose we drink her health?'

'With all my heart,' replied Richard.

Pogey drank her health with a loud splutter of enthusiasm, and all the honors.

'She's not the sort of a woman that will remain long a widow,' he resumed; 'soft eye and delicate skin—sweet as a nut! Women of that kind always marry again.'

'It never occurred to me,' said Richard.

'Meg!' cried out Pogey, at the top of his voice.

This summons had reference to a heavy thread in the passage, and was answered by a frowsy woman wrapped up in numerous shawls, one of which was drawn over her head, and pinned close under her chin.

'Where are the oysters?'

'Below, waiting your orders,' replied the old woman, wheezing through the shawls, which she gathered about her mouth as she spoke.

'Below!' cried Pogey; 'but we want them here. Come—be alive!' and Meg moved lumberingly out, and presently returned, wheezing fearfully under a tray, containing a bountiful supply of oysters, and their auxiliary accompaniments.

'There, that will do—now take yourself off;' and Meg took herself off as she was desired.

The oysters were discussed with considerable *goût*, Mr. Pogey enlightening Richard upon the natural history of shell-fish, and their action upon the fluids of the body.

'I often prescribed oysters,' he observed, 'for old Raggles—no, he wouldn't listen to it. He had a notion that they were too cold for the stomach—poor old pump! By the way, Rawlings, I haven't forgiven you for turning me out of the room, you remember.'

'Oh, yes! I remember—but you mustn't blame me, Mr. Pogey—what could I do? It was his own request.'

'Pish, man! you don't suppose I was hurt at it—I'm used to such things. They pass by me, as the immortal bard says, like the idle wind, which I take no notice of. It's part of my profession to be knocked about. But what had he to say to you? what was it? anything about *her?*'

'No, nothing at all. I don't think he had anything to say.'

'There was something on his mind, Rawlings: I tried to get it out of him—might as well try to get gravy out of a stone—wouldn't speak to anybody but you. And after all it came to nothing—eh?'

'Why, it was nearly all over, you know, when I came in.'

'Yes, but you were with him a quarter of an hour, and he had his speech plain

enough when I left him. No secret, Rawlings?'

'Secret, Mr. Pogey? Is it likely, of all people in the world, he would confide a secret to me?'

'Why not? It looked very like it. What did he want with you?'

'That's altogether unaccountable, for he never showed any confidence in me and always treated me with harshness—cruelty; but he's gone now, and I forgive him.'

'Right, Rawlings. Resentments are only a waste of time; and life is so short, that we have hardly room enough to take care of ourselves, and pick up a little pleasure as we get along.'

'Pleasure, Mr. Pogey? I haven't had much of that.'

'So much the better; you'll enjoy it the more when it comes. We can't have our own way at all times, and must make the most of it when we have it. That's sound philosophy, I believe—eh? Look at me—see how I rub through—I'm never put out. I should like to see the difficulty that would put me out. I take the sunny side of the way; depend upon it there's always a sunny side, if we will only take the trouble to cross over. Raggles never could see it, and was groping all his life like a mole in the dark. He was just the man to have a burthen upon his mind, and he had, I'm sure of that.'

The conversation was here interrupted at this point by a sharp ring of the dispensary bell, instantly followed by an apparition that popped in at the door, of a sallow face, fiercely moustached, with a mop of dark clustering hair, buried under the shadow of a large white hat.

'Engaged?' said the head.

'Ha! Captain, is that you?" returned Pogey, annoyed at the interruption.

'Busy?—I'll look in again.'

'Well—I *am* busy just now,' said Pogey.

'You look deucedly comfortable,' said the head, thrusting itself a little farther into the room, and drawing three-fourths of its body after it. The speaker wore a frock-coat, buttoned up closely to the throat, and carried a heavy stick, which he balanced in his left hand, as he stood half-revealed in the doorway.

'We're on a little private business,' cried Pogey, 'or I'd ask you to join us.'

'Wouldn't break in upon you for all the world, my good fellow,' returned the Captain; 'only just popped in to see if you were alive. No smell of frost here—cuts like a razor outside. I say, Pogey, really busy?—very particular? Couldn't take me into consultation?'

'Why, the fact is, Captain, we're engaged upon a family matter.'

'I wish I was one of the family,' returned the Captain; couldn't vote me a thirty-first cousin, or something of that kind.'

'Well, for half a minute,' said Pogey, good-humoredly; 'we'll admit you as a family adviser, to give us your opinion upon a receipt I have been recommending to my friend here; but——'

'On honor!' said the Captain, stretching over to the table, while Pogey brewed a rapid mixture of rum, brandy and hot water, flavored with a prodigious quantity of lemon and lump sugar; 'on honor—don't be alarmed—I shan't sit down. I'll back Pogey,' he continued, addressing himself to Richard, 'against any man in England at an impromptu glass of punch. Take a lesson, sir, from Pogey—he despises measures—trusts to his eye, and hits off the quantities with precision. I never knew him fail.'

'How do you find it?' said Pogey.

'Perfect!' returned the Captain; 'confoundedly hot—all the better for that, you know, with the thermometer out of sight below freezing point. I tell you what is, Pogey, I haven't the honor of knowing your friend's name, but he may take my word for it—*experientia docet*—that he has got into capital quarters for the night. I see your in for it.'

'My friend,' observed Pogey, 'is Mr. Rawlings—Captain Scott Dingle.'

'Delighted to make your acquaintance, sir,' cried Captain Scott Dingle, gathering his stick under his left arm, and extending his right hand to Richard, the other being engaged in poising his glass; 'devilish sorry, though, to lose it so soon—happy to improve it on the earliest opportunity.'

'So you shall, Captain,' said Pogey.

'That's a bargain,' returned the Captain; 'I'll hold you to that. Name your own time, and I'm your man. Nothing to do but to devote myself to my friends. Happy to come to you any night you like—Wednesday, Thursday, Friday—when shall it be? I'll look in to-morrow as I'm taking my rounds. Oysters—you have been indulging in oysters. Do you recommend oysters to your patients, Pogey?'

'Not to you,' cried Pogey; 'it depends on constitution—and I should say——'

'That's enough—I see! no oysters for me. Very well, I'll have my revenge some night. Honor! I'm gone—*exit* Dingle into the snow. So, here goes—your health and good night. Take a friend's advice, and don't go into excess. You look devilish dissipated, Pogey—that's a fact—well—I'm gone. A rush through the ice, and home to bed like an Esquimaux. Shan't stir out of your chair—ceremony with me?—not a bit of it. Good night, Rawlings—delighted to meet you again, and as soon as you like.

Good night, Pogey, my ancient!' and, vanishing through the door, the quick tingle of the bell announced that Captain Scott Dingle had taken his departure.

'There he goes!' cried Pogey; 'replenish your glass, Rawlings. We musn't let Dingle spoil our evening. A hair-brained, light-hearted dog. You'd suppose now that he and I were old friends?'

'Certainly,' returned Richard; 'he seems on very intimate terms.'

'Exactly so: that's his way with every body. He'll be as intimate with you the next time he meets you. Come—I'm ahead of you—let me brew for you. I have known Dingle now, somewhere about six weeks.'

'Six weeks,' said Richard, 'I should have guessed as many years.'

'He came into my dispensary one morning, introduced himself, held me in a trance with a long rigmarole story, dropped in again in the evening, and has continued to drop in at all hours, half-a-dozen times a day ever since. He's as much at home here as I am myself. Meg!'

The bundle of shawls heaved up slowly out of the side-door.

'Shut up, Meg,' said Pogey; 'and mind, if I'm wanted, call up Pim. Be alive!'

It was as much as that heap of shawls could do to be alive; and Mr. Pogey appeared to be perfectly aware of the fact, from his frequent appeals to its vitality. When Meg was dismissed to the shades Mr. Pogey resumed.

'An old campaigner, that Dingle. Served in the Peninsular, came home, was put upon half-pay, and lives like an industrious bee by succulent extracts from every chance acquaintance he happens to light upon.—Dingle's a gentleman, notwithstanding. No crime to be poor; hang it! it isn't that—but he's so confoundedly familiar, that once you let him inside your house, he establishes himself as a fixture!'

'I think I have heard the name before,' said Richard: 'Scott Dingle?'

'No,' replied Pogey; 'not likely to be much in your way. He says he belongs to an old stock—Dorsetshire, or somewhere—but the estates have gone somehow out of the family. That's always the case. No great matter, as far as he is concerned, for if he had the estate, it would run through his hands like water. Rather a different sort of man from Raggles—rather.'

'He knew the value of money,' returned Richard; 'although, Mr. Pogey, it appears to me that one might make a more profitable use of their money than hoarding it up.'

'I agree with you, Rawlings,' said Pogey; 'I like the sentiment. Money is necessary as a foundation; but if there was to be nothing but foundations, what should we do for houses? That's my view of it. Get the foundation first—all right—no objection to that: but when you've laid your foundation, begin to build—eh? Good sense, that, I suspect. We're not to be always grubbing in the earth—must begin to live some time. Practical that—eh?'

'Progress, sir,' said Richard; 'we have, all of us, a right to look forward. There's no reason, I think, why a man with health and a clear head shouldn't make his way in the world.'

'None whatever. Everything has a beginning. Where were your dukes and marquises two or three hundred years ago! They had their beginnings, as well as you or me.'

'True, Mr. Pogey, true. It's a thing to think of. But then the difficulty is the beginning.'

'The difficulty, Rawlings, is the first guinea. Get your first guinea, and the rest will follow, just as you put a seed in the ground, and a lusty plant grows out of it choked up with seeds. I haven't lived for nothing. Where should I be if I hadn't watched the main chance? And I am watching it every day, and, unless I make a false move, it must come to something at last.'

Mr. Pogey was evidently becoming very frank and communicative. Perhaps it was the liberal punch, which loosens the tongue and melts down all prudent reserve; perhaps it was that he had taken a sudden fancy to Rawlings; perhaps both. Rawlings was in a position to be serviceable to him in a certain design which was dimly shaping itself in his mind, and which, in the confidence of hospitality,—for Pogey was hospitable in the most miscellaneous sense,—was prematurely betraying itself. There is nothing so dangerous to inchoate projects as a close bacchanalian *tete-a-tete*. It somehow brings them out, one cannot tell how, before their time. Men ought to wait till their projects are clearly resolved upon, and their means fully prepared, before they take people into their confidence, and then they should proceed with cautious circumspection. Had any body consulted Pogey on such a point, in the cool of the morning, he would have been decidedly of this opinion; but it was now waxing late into a winter's night, and Pogey was snugly seated at home over the fire, entertaining a guest, and that guest happened to be a person that might be useful to him, and so, in the fulness of his enjoyment, he ran his head against his own sober judgment.

'You were talking of Mrs. Raggles,' said Pogey; 'she must administer to the property. Now what is your private opinion,

Rawlings,—don't suppose I'm inquisitive,—not at all,—but I've a reason,—what is your private opinion about the property? Do you think he really left much behind?'

'I know so little about his affairs,' replied Richard, 'that I'm afraid if I ventured an opinion, I should only mislead you.'

'My dear Rawlings,' returned Pogey, 'I don't ask what you *know*—but what you *think*. In a word—do you think he died rich?'

'Rich? Well, rich certainly. I think there can be no doubt of that.'

'You think so? I'm delighted to hear it. Kind, friendly soul, that Mrs. Raggles.—Sweet temper!—you ought to know that, at all events.'

'We heard very little of her in the house."

'Modest as a daisy, "wee, crimsom-tipped flower," moving about like a sunbeam over the floor. That's the woman to make a man happy,—voice as low and mellow as a flute. It goes to my heart to think she should be a widow. I take a great interest in widows,—it's one of my weaknessess.—There's something uncommonly attractive in a young widow,—don't know what it is,—never could find out. The sensibilities of the sex seem to be awakened in a peculiar manner during their transit through that agitating interregnum. I always fancy that the second husband comes in a sort of burst of surprise upon them, making up by a wonderful provision of nature for the arrears of his predecessor. She's safe to marry again.'

'Very probable, now that you mention it. I never thought of that; it's quite a new light to me. But you know the world better than I do, Mr. Pogey.'

'Mark what I tell you, she'll marry again—and soon. If I don't mistake, Rawlings, I've got somebody in my eye for her.'

'Already, Mr. Pogey?'

'Already, Mr. Pogey? Why not, Mr. Rawlings? A woman with a snug settlement at her back, is safe to be picked up in no time. And such a woman as Barbara Raggles! She's a picture to look at, "grace in every step, in every gesture dignity," and —and—the rest of it! Just imagine Barbara Raggles seated there at the head of that table, doing the honors—eh? Don't you think it would make a great difference?'

'It would be an extraordinary change for you, Mr. Pogey, if that's what you mean."

'I don't say that's what I mean—but I do say that a professional man, like me, ought to have a wife. I'm not in love, Rawlings—though I might have been in love over and over again. It didn't exactly suit. I don't fancy raw girls—they know nothing of the world. I like a wife ready-made to my hand—no nonsense, training, and teaching the young idea how to shoot. Haven't time for that. A widow that has served her apprenticeship, and comes to the business wide awake—that's the trump card for me. Now there's Barbara Raggles—what a combination is there! young and rich—don't run away with the notion that I'm in love, but if I were to fall in love—I say, Rawlings, if such a thing were to happen—Barbara Raggles is the woman for my money.'

'It never struck me,' said Richard, 'Mrs. Raggles marry again.'

'Is there anything so surprising in that?'

'Oh! no—of course—I see it clearly—and you really mean, Mr. Pogey——'

'Rawlings, my boy—the fact of the matter is—another glass before you start.'

'I daren't—I feel my head giddy already—it isn't as well seasoned as yours, you know, But you were going to say——'

'Between ourselves, we must pull together. I am factotum there, and can do anything. Do you understand? I'm beginning to get tired of single blessedness. I've had enough of that sort of blessedness, and find it rather dismal. Just look at my books—survey my shelves in "admired disorder"—I'm a great reader, when I've nothing else to do—but I don't know how it is, I never can put a book back into its right place, or find it when I want it. Then, my rum and brandy have an ugly habit of getting very low, all of a sudden; and things break of themselves; and there's nothing where it ought to be, and everything's wrong, and, in short—I have been thinking seriously that I want a wife.'

'And Mrs. Raggles——'

'That depends, Rawlings. I wouldn't marry any woman for her money—but to marry without money—to work up-hill against wind and weather, requires consideration—I tell you what it is—we must see our way a little. No harm in that.—There's a good business, you know—a capital business—suppose now, by and bye, a certain event should happen—why, there's a chance for you—somebody must take the business—eh! Rawlings? Let us just have a peep into the property—you can manage all that—do you see daylight now?'

'Well, I think it *is* near daylight, Mr. Pogey; and all this is so new and strange to me, that we had better talk of it another time.'

'Keep your own counsel—not a word about me.'

'You may be sure of that,' replied Richard.

'It may never come to anything, you know, and one doesn't like to be talked about for nothing.'

'Certainly not,' replied Richard.

A few more admonitions about secresy, and a shout of hilarious friendship from Mr. Pogey, and they parted.

'And so,' thought Richard, as he walked home through the frosty night, 'Mr. Pogey is laying himself out to marry Mrs. Raggles!'

CHAPTER VII.

WHICH TREATS OF LADIES.

Mrs. Raggles administered to upwards of seven thousand pounds. Although the amount was considerably larger than Mr. Pogey had originaly anticipated, he was by no means satisfied that they had traced out the whole of the deecased's estate. This is a very common infirmity. Exorbitant desires grow upon unexpected fortune. In this case, perhaps, there was some excuse for Mr. Pogey's unreasonableness. The seven thousand were got at by degrees, item by item, through a series of discoveries amongst scrubby memoranda, sinister scraps of paper, and ill-kept books, so that Mr. Pogey was, to some extent, justified in supposing, or suspecting, that more discoveries might remain behind.

Respecting the management of this property, which was chiefly invested in mortgages and loans, a difference of opinion arose between Mr. Pogey and Richard Rawlings. Mr. Pogey was for calling it in and realizing at once; Richard thought it would be imprudent to make any sudden changes, that it would look like a pressure for ready money, and shake confidence. Between her two eabinet ministers, Mrs. Raggles was grievously perplexed. She had no very clear perception of her own as to what she ought to do; and was governed, from day to day, by the opinion of the last speaker. In this state of oscillation she left things as they were, and did nothing; which was exactly what Richard Rawlings wished her to do.

Recovering gently out of the first shock of her bereavement, Mrs. Raggles gradually resumed her natural spirits, and became very much like what she had been before her marriage, with the addition of a more knowledgable display of personal attractions, and a certain air of womanly development that greatly improved her appearance. The shyness of girlhood was displaced by a dash of confidence that imparted an agreeable ambiguity to her manners not unlikely to be mistaken on the surface for coquetry. Everybody said she looked positively fascinating in her weeds, and you could see the effect of all this homage in the pretty capriciousness that flirted in and out of her eyes, and round the corners of her mouth.

Women of every mould—the stern, the tender, the truthful, the false,—may be said to derive their skill in flirting direct from nature; it is an instinct or primary law of their organization; nor can any period of time be safely assigned when it ceases to influence their intercourse with the other sex. Whether nature meant anything serious by this constitutional tendency must for ever remain amongst the unsolved problems of creation; but undoubtedly it has produced some serious results in the world, and in no instances with more remarkable effect than in the case of young widows. Unmarried ladies either are, or think it desirable to seem, very vague and innocent in their practice of this art of flirtation, as if it were dazzling their senses without their knowing why, and drawing them, like a piece of witchcraft, into an enchanted labyrinth, of the ways of which they are profoundly ignorant. This charming simplicity and unconsciousness, apparently so defenceless and trusting, is wonderfully agreeable and bewildering, and flattering to the superior knowledge and power of young gentlemen who, with scarcely any down on their chins, and a great deal on their understandings, are thereby led to believe that they have the victim in their toils, and may wind her, and delude her at their will and pleasure. But flirtation in the hands of a young widow is quite a different affair. The art here is at its height, and is conducted with scientific strategy. There is no remote unexplored fairy-land in the distance; the *finesse* of expression has no escape in indistinct meanings, but carries avowedly the confession of its aim and end; the skilful by-play, the advance and retreat, the lures, surprises, feints, and evasions are part and parcel of the action of a real drama. Here the face of coquetry is not hidden behind an impenetrable mask; it only wears a veil of delicate gauze through which its glowing features are tantalizingly revealed.

Mrs. Raggles, now that she had become accustomed to her new circumstances, and had begun to enjoy (we hope we may be forgiven for this word) her freedom and independence, displayed a proficiency in the art of flirtation for which probably the reader, who has hitherto seen her only in her secondary relations with society, would hardly be disposed to give her credit. She came out marvellously strong, considering her opportunities. The first person who fell within the range of her influence was Captain Scott Dingle. But we must not anticipate the adventures of her widowhood. There are a few slight incidents to be cleared off before we come to this point.

Within a week or two after Mrs. Raggles had taken out letters of administration, it was considered desirable that she should recruit her health by a change of scene. Mr. Pogey urgently recommended this measure. Her nerves were affected by recent anxieties,

and by the gloom and depression of that stifling and dreary house in the market-place. Mr. Pogey's friendly offices on the occasion were not limited to mere advice; he took the trouble of providing a suitable residence for her in the country, some five or six miles from Yarlton, at the cottage of a lady who was a particular friend of his own, and who, on a short notice, displayed the liveliest interest in her situation. Mrs. McSpurl was a widow, like herself, and could sympathise in her distress; and had arrived at that matronly period of life when she could, with propriety, undertake so responsible a charge. Mrs. McSpurl was remarkably small in stature, quick and terse of speech, with a sharp Scotch accent, painfully neat in her household, and perfect mistress of the secrets of domestic economy, which appeared to constitute the principal business of her life. Her cottage stood in its own garden, through which a gravel-walk, closely boxed at each side, and buttoned up at top and bottom with vases of stone-crop, that drooped out over the edges in the same pattern, as if they had grown to order, went straight from the little gate to the door. You could see, in a moment, that a careful hand presided over the place.—Trees were dropped exactly opposite to each other; every shrub on the left had its counterpart on the right; the door-step was as white as a cambric handkerchief; the creepers on the front of the house betrayed no vagrant luxuriance, every tendril clung close to the wall, and was nailed accurately to the very tip, so that not a solitary bud escaped into the air; and the interior was a model of precision, from the hall-mat, that looked so dry and crisp, to the little dimity curtains in the attic window, that pierced the centre of the blue slates, and had as prim an aspect as if they were starched to the glass. Even in the winter time, notwithstanding the snow which mottled the ground, Bermuda Cottage, for such it was called, had a gay and bright exterior.

It was quite a little expedition, the journey to Bermuda Cottage, a world of packing and flurry and preparation preceded the departure, and when Mrs. Raggles arrived at her destination, and found herself in a cheerful little room looking out upon the open country, a few tears started into her eyes.

'We'll try,' said Mrs. McSpurl, 'if we can't make you a wee bit comfortable. The pure air will set up your speerits again.—You've had a sair trial of it; but it's a parfect waste of the animal economy to greet o'er our troubles; so, just set yoursel' down there, and don't fash yoursel' any mair. A cup of strong tea will bring ye all right. Gude help us! but ye do look drouthy and ramfeezled!'

Leaving Mrs. Raggles to recover her spirits under the judicious auspices of Mrs. McSpurl, we will return to Yarlton.

Agreeably to the arrangements entered into with Mr. Pogey, Richard Rawlings had undertaken the entire management of the widow's affairs, and as it was indispensably necessary that somebody should reside on the premises, he was regularly installed in the house as soon as Mrs. Raggles had taken her departure. As for the difference of opinion between him and Mr. Pogey, respecting the future disposal of the property, that was merely a question of expediency which they occasionally discussed, but which never interfered with their amicable relations.

The business was now substantially vested in his hands. He threw himself actively into its details, and opening a personal communication with the various individuals of every degree, with whom Mr. Raggles had been connected, he soon acquired a complete control over the whole of the matters entrusted to him.

A striking change had taken place in Richard Rawlings. The cloud had passed away. His handsome features brightened under his new fortunes; and, although the natural tone of his face was that of a grave and earnest serenity, it was sometimes lighted up by an expression almost amounting to gaiety. You could see that the repose of his manner was the repose of success; and if he never gave way to any bursts of hilarity such as shallower men could hardly have repressed under similar circumstances, a close observer might detect beneath his reserve the quiet exultation that made sure of the present, and looked steadily into the future.

Captain Scott Dingle was an excellent judge of the externals of character in his own way. Like most men who have passed much of their time in mess-rooms and military quarters, abroad and at home, he had a certain theory of the elements that enter into the social compilation of a gentleman. They were certainly not very profound or mysterious, and did not make a very heavy demand upon the mental or heroic faculties. It was with him rather a matter of taste than of observation. Personal appearance went a long way with Dingle: air, figure, manner, self-possession, and the absence of salient vulgarities (even if it left nothing but an inoffensive blank behind) contributed largely to his ideal, and were taken in at a glance. He saw that Richard Rawlings possessed these traits in a higher degree than Mr. Pogey, although he could not see the weightier qualities that formed the substratum of his character. Pogey's geniality and eternal flutter amused Dingle, and gave a fillup to his vacant hours; but we are afraid

that the worthy apothecary's boisterous address, which thundered down upon you sometimes like an avalanche, did not exactly square with the Captain's private standard. Richard had at least the advantage of a complexional seriousness, which, if it did not bring out the breeding of a gentleman, had the happy effect of concealing the want of it; and the Captain accordingly took an extraordinary fancy to Richard, and cultivated him with assiduity. As for Dingle himself, knocking recklessly about the world as he was, his somewhat Bohemian way of life rendered him by no means particular in his choice of acquaintances; he took them all as they came, and made the most of them, as it suited his humor; but he could, nevertheless, discriminate when he liked, and always preferred the man who came nearest to his notions of a gentleman, although he was too indolent to go out of his course to seek them.

Having nothing whatever to do, he had no sooner beaten up Richard's quarters than he became a constant visiter. Richard looked upon him as the type of a class of society to which he had hitherto had no opportunities of ascending, and he encouraged him as a sort of rough study.

In the confidence which grew out of this intimacy Dingle opened his heart to Richard, whereby he found himself ultimately involved in rather an awkward *imbroglio*. It appeared that Mr. Pogey, relying upon the Captain's superior knowledge of social tactics, and the attraction of his profession—for Mr. Pogey was of opinion with Sir Lucius O'Trigger, that the ladies have a touch of the old serpent in them, and are caught, like vipers, with a bit of red cloth—had engaged him in his interest with the widow, and taking him out one fine morning to Bermuda Cottage, introduced him in form, as his particular friend. Mr. Pogey was not the person to conduct an affair of this nature with the requisite discretion; he could not keep his own counsel, and expecting to make a great hit with the widow through the agency of Captain Scott Dingle, he revealed to that gentleman the secret of his design upon her. The immediate result of the introduction was communicated to Richard by the Captain in a moment of overflowing cordiality. Dingle considered Richard as *safe* as Pogey had considered Dingle.—Richard took up much the same position between the two as the lawyer that arbitrated the famous oyster case.

We may here remark, by way of parenthesis, that men who exhibit the highest sense of honor in other affairs, sometimes commit the most flagrant breaches of trust in the affairs of love. They will sacrifice a friend in such cases with as little remorse as if the whole thing were a jest at a masquerade. Strange that women, to whom we ascribe the most refining and elevating influences, should ruin our morals in this way. Alas! alas! there is no morality in love!

'Pogey *would* whisk me off with him,' said Dingle; 'no great fancy to morning visits—rather out of my line latterly; but I went to oblige him. Found the widow in the garden, clipping the shrubs with a pair of scissors; and that little Scotch woman darting about like a May-fly. You should have seen Mrs. Raggles, when Pogey introduced me.'

'A little frightened, I dare say,' observed Richard.

'Frightened, my good fellow! I *have* seen a pretty considerable multitude of women in my time, Rawlings,—brown, white and red; but in the inductive science of ogling a man,—phrooh!' said the Captain, with a long whistle; 'she beats them hollow. A woman of some breeding does the thing by degress, throws out an inuendo from the corner of her eye, calls it back again, and plays you like a trout. But Mrs. Raggles dips into the stream at once, and sweeps in her fish with a net.'

The Captain did not do justice to Mrs. Raggles. He indulged in rather a loose view of that embarrassing interview with the widow. The fact was, that when he was introduced to her by Mr. Pogey, with a cannonade of bows and flourishes, poor Mrs. Raggles was taken by surprise, and her long eyelashes dropped suddenly, and the blood bounded into her cheeks and flushed up over her forehead. But feeling it necessary not to betray any timidity, or to show that she was disconcerted or flurried, by the sudden introduction of a strange gentleman, she did open her eyes again, and casting a sidelong glance upon him, which was so natural in her circumstances, and which she meant for a mixture of bashfulness and easy confidence, she unintentionally conveyed to him that dubious expression which some men are so apt to interpret to their own advantage. The Captain quickly availed himself of the opening which his vanity fancied it had detected in this innocent reception, and followed it up with such a volley of compliments as to heighten the lady's confusion, and compel her to adopt a variety of ways of looking at him under the milk-white round of that coquettish cap which was now brought into action for the first time, and which only inflamed the impression she had so undesignedly made upon him. Ladies are much exposed to this sort of injurious misconstruction from that self-flattery of men which is so apt to find latent meanings in their looks. If they

could only contrive to talk without making use of their eyes, they would escape a great deal of troublesome speculation.

According to Captain Dingle's account, they staid that day for dinner, and walked out in the evening (the season was now advanced into spring), Pogey insisting upon Mrs. Raggles taking the Captain's arm, while he escorted Mrs. M'Spurl, whom he was careful to engross at a distance, that he might give the Captain a better opportunity of making way with Mrs. Raggles. During that walk, it seemed (to the Captain) that the lady was even more piquant in her glances than before, looking occasionally down upon the ground, then sidling off, as if she would break away from him, then turning her eyes softly upon him, with a mixed expression of depreeation and playful reproach, and occasionally pressing rather heavily upon his arm. Out of all these signs, and tokens and omens, and many others of a like significant kind, the Captain extracted a conviction that the widow had fallen in love with him at sight, which conviction was confirmed by a stray observation that escaped her, and to which nobody else would have attached quite so much importance. Arrived at the gate, on their return to the cottage, the Captain, being very gallant under the exeitement of his feelings, whispered something in her ear, to which she replied, flirting her muff in his face, 'Get along with you, do!' He considered that conclusive.

'The fact is, Rawlings,' said the Captain, 'I'm not a marrying man—never dreamt of such a thing—but when a woman with seven thousand pounds throws herself at your head, what's a fellow to do! As for Pogey—stuff and nonsense—she only laughs in her sleeve at him. I could see that clearly. I ought to know the sex tolerably—pretty extensive experience—have seen them at all ages, and in all climates. Pogey has as much chance in that quarter as my bamboo. You may consider the thing settled, old fellow! Keep a sharp look-out, and when I have converted the widow into Mrs. Scott Dingle, won't I treat you to an explosion!'

'So,' thought Richard, when the Captain had left him to meditate upon this unexpected piece of intelligence, 'Captain Scott Dingle is laying himself out to marry Mrs. Raggles!'

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and Autumn was in the woods. The pleasant air, with a thought of chilliness in it, sang amongst the leaves, and turned them inside out, and sometimes in sport carried them away. With the changes of the seasons come changes in the lives of young and old. Amusements, occupations, hopes, recolleetions, anniversaries, undergo vicissitudes of bud, and bloom, and blight, just like trees and flowers; and equinox and solstice mark revolutions in the moral as in the physical world. The oak was shedding its foliage, and Mrs. Raggles her weeds.

She still remained at Bermuda Cottage; and during the intervening months, Mr. Pogey and Captain Scott Dingle sedulously continued their visits, with such fluctuations in their suits as might be expected from the flickering eaprice of a lady who did not exactly know her own mind, and who, if the truth in such matters could be got at, enjoyed vastly more the pleasure of keeping them both in a flutter of uncertainty than of resolving the doubts of either, which would have brought her pastime to a close. And so it happened, that when the Autumn arrived, neither the captain nor the apothecary was much nearer his objeet than when he started.

In the meanwhile Richard Rawlings devoted himself with assiduity to the widow's affairs. His efforts were crowned with success. His own circumstances were considerably improved, and without committing himself to any personal display, he wore the appearance of one who had acquired a responsible position. The crushed boy had risen to the stature and bearing of a man.

It was, of course, necessary for him to keep up a constant communication with Mrs. Raggles; and the contrast between his manner and that of her other visitors was very apparent to her, and, at first not very agreeable. Reserved, quiet, and almost grave, he never attempted to flatter her foibles—he did not even seem to be conscious of them, and nearly inspired her with a belief that she possessed a respectable understanding, by always addressing her as if he believed in it himself. Pogey and Dingle amused her, and when they made their appearance, nothing could exceed her high spirits. When Richard Rawlings came, the scene was as suddenly changed as if the curtain had been dropped on the play, and the lights put out. His serious temperament put her gaiety to silenee; and, although he was younger and handsomer than either of her more lively friends, she could not bring herself to regard him in his youthful form, but only in that still and sage aspect which a woman's imagination usually associates with more advanced years.

Sometimes, on his way to the eottage, he